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Harmonizing Regional and National Regulations to Accelerate Stunting Reduction in Gowa Regency

Aliffiani Widyansyah^{*}, Asep Sapsudin¹

¹Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia

^{*} Corresponding author: Aliffiani Widyansyah (aliffianiwidyansyah@gmail.com)

Abstract

Stunting remains a critical public health issue in Indonesia, affecting physical growth, cognitive development, and future productivity. Despite national initiatives, including Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 on the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, regional implementation faces challenges due to limited resources, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and varying institutional capacities. This study aims to examine the synchronization between national and regional regulations in Gowa Regency, focusing on the implementation of Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023. Employing a normative juridical approach complemented by field data analysis, the study assesses legal-normative alignment, policy substance, technical procedures, and governance mechanisms while integrating theories of legal systems, social systems, and policy implementation. Findings indicate that legal-normative and strategic synchronization is strong, yet operational and technical dimensions remain partially aligned. Cross-sectoral coordination, the role of TPPS, data integration, and budgeting mechanisms were identified as critical factors influencing implementation. Adaptive synchronization, combining normative adherence with local operational flexibility, has contributed to a significant reduction in stunting prevalence from 33 percent in 2022 to 17 percent in 2024. The study concludes that robust regulatory alignment, complemented by context-specific adaptations, enhances policy effectiveness and recommends strengthening human resources, integrated data systems, and multi-stakeholder collaboration to sustain stunting reduction efforts.

Keywords

Adaptive Synchronization, Cross-Sectoral Coordination, Gowa Regency, Regulatory Alignment, Stunting Reduction.

1. Introduction

Stunting is a serious public health issue in Indonesia as it affects physical growth, cognitive development, and future productivity (Mustakim et al., 2022; Akbar et al., 2023; Rambe et al., 2023; Lestari, 2024). The central government has established Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction, with a target prevalence of 14% by 2024. However, a gap remains between *das sollen* (normative rules) and *das sein* (implementation reality), where regional policies face various constraints such as budget limitations, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and suboptimal institutional capacity. As a priority locus for stunting reduction, Gowa Regency is critical to study in the context of synchronization between national and regional regulations.

Despite multiple efforts, the implementation of stunting policies in regions, including Gowa Regency, still faces significant challenges, particularly suboptimal synchronization between national and regional regulations, which hinders the achievement of national targets. Previous studies emphasize the importance of regulatory harmonization. Partadisastra and Octaria (2023) found that policy consistency between national and regional levels was a key factor in Bulungan Regency. Fitriani et al. (2024) highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral coordination in Semarang City. Herawati and Sunjaya (2022) reported limited human resource capacity and weak coordination at the sub-district and village levels in Cirebon Regency.

This study employs multiple theoretical frameworks to understand the complexity of policy synchronization in Gowa Regency. Lawrence Friedman's Legal System Theory evaluates policy effectiveness through three components: structure, substance, and legal culture, explaining how regional institutions, regulatory substance, and bureaucratic culture support stunting reduction policies (Friedman, 2019; Lippman, 2020). Talcott Parsons' Social System Theory, through the AGIL framework (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency), posits that social system success depends on adaptive capacity, goal clarity, integration among components, and value maintenance, useful for analyzing how central and regional governments adjust policies and maintain cross-sectoral coordination (Parsons, 2013).

Van Meter and Van Horn's Policy Implementation Theory asserts that implementation effectiveness is influenced by six factors: policy standards and objectives, resources, characteristics of implementing agencies, inter-organizational communication, socio-economic conditions, and implementers' disposition (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). This framework is used to assess the implementation of Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023, which is a derivative of Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021. Additionally, Ansell and Gash's (2008) and Hamka and Ibrahim's (2025) evaluations evaluate the extent to which cross-sector actors, government, private sector, and community support public policy success, particularly the performance of the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (*Tim Percepatan Penurunan Stunting/TPPS*) in fostering collaboration and participation. Empirical data indicate that stunting prevalence in Indonesia remains high at 19.8% in 2024. In Gowa Regency, prevalence decreased from 33% in 2022 to 17% in 2024, yet still above the national target (Government of Gowa Regency, 2022). Key challenges include non-result-based budget allocation, weak TPPS performance, and limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, underscoring the importance of regulatory harmonization and legal conformity (World Health Organization, 2014; Singh, 2024; Nahwan et al., 2025).

Based on these issues, the main challenges in stunting policy include gaps between national and regional regulations, weak cross-sectoral coordination, and suboptimal implementation relative to national targets. Previous studies highlight

the importance of regulatory harmonization. Partadisastra and Octaria (2023) emphasize policy consistency between national and regional levels as fundamental to program success, and Fitriani et al. (2024) underscore effective cross-sectoral coordination in a collaborative governance framework in Semarang City. However, Herawati and Sunjaya (2022) noted that limited human resources hindered implementation at the sub-district and village levels.

Although prior studies have mapped structural and coordination barriers, they remain limited in explaining how local governments strategically adapt rigid national regulations. Most studies view synchronization in binary terms (aligned or misaligned). This study addresses this gap by introducing the concept of “Adaptive Synchronization” in Gowa Regency. Unlike previous findings, it demonstrates that although technical synchronization (data integration) remains partial, strong normative synchronization combined with local operational flexibility can significantly reduce stunting prevalence. This study aims to assess the alignment between Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023, using a normative-legal method with vertical and horizontal synchronization approaches. Thus, this research offers a novel contribution regarding the dynamics of *das sollen* and *das sein* in health governance in the era of decentralization.

2. Methods

This study employs a normative juridical approach to comprehensively analyze both national and regional regulations related to the acceleration of stunting reduction in Indonesia, with a particular focus on Gowa Regency (Negara, 2023). The main objective is to assess regulatory conformity based on fundamental legal principles, the hierarchy of regulations, and principles of harmonization to ensure the effective implementation of stunting reduction programs. The object of study encompasses Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021, relevant Ministry of Health regulations, Ministry of Home Affairs regulations, regional regulations, Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023, the Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah/RPJMD*) of Gowa Regency, and other derivative documents and guidelines that support policy implementation at the local level.

Data for this study were obtained from three primary sources. The first source consists of primary legal materials, including national and regional laws, statutes, and regulations that form the legal foundation of stunting reduction policies. The second source includes secondary legal materials, such as scientific literature, peer-reviewed journals, official government reports, and academic studies that provide contextual insights and support the interpretation of regulatory frameworks. The third source comprises tertiary legal materials, including legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and reference works, which help clarify legal concepts, terminology, and interpretations relevant to this research. Data collection was conducted primarily through library research and document review to ensure a thorough understanding of regulatory content, context, and interrelations.

The research procedure involves several stages. First, a regulatory inventory and classification is carried out to identify the scope, hierarchy, and interconnections between national and regional legal instruments. Second, conformity analysis is conducted through vertical and horizontal synchronization to detect areas of alignment, disharmony, or normative voids. Third, legal interpretation is applied to analyze the implications of regulatory compliance and gaps on the implementation of stunting reduction programs. Data analysis utilizes grammatical and systematic interpretation, conceptual assessment, and principles of law to provide a detailed evaluation of harmonization. This method allows the study to generate meaningful

recommendations for strengthening the governance, coordination, and effectiveness of stunting reduction acceleration in Gowa Regency.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Normative Synchronization of National and Regional Regulations

From a legal-normative perspective, the harmonization between central and regional regulations in Gowa Regency is categorized as high. The Government of Gowa Regency has formally adopted Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction as the primary reference for formulating Gowa Regent Regulation Number 05 of 2023. This alignment is evident in the adoption of national strategies, targets, and performance indicators into the regional policy framework.

Using Talcott Parsons' system theory, this synchronization functions as an integration mechanism between political and administrative subsystems (Parsons & White, 2022). National regulations serve as normative inputs guiding policy direction, while regional regulations act as operational outputs adjusted to local socio-economic conditions (Chakwizira, 2021; Prokhorova et al., 2023). This ensures that the policy is not merely a top-down instruction but is accommodated within the local legal framework.

Table 1. Comparison of National Regulations and Gowa Regent Regulation

National Regulation	Main Substance	Adoption in Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5/2023	Remarks
Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021	Cross-sectoral convergence, TPPS establishment, integrated M&E	Establishment of TPPS from the regency to the village level, RAD formulation	High synchronization in institutional and strategic aspects
Minister of Health Regulation Number 21 of 2020	Focus on maternal and child nutrition, growth monitoring	Programs for pregnant women nutrition and <i>posyandu</i> strengthening	Aligned, but constrained by health HR capacity
Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 59 of 2021	Performance-based budgeting	Budget allocation for stunting is included in the APBD	Implementation is still input-based, not fully output-based
National Strategy (<i>Strategi Nasional/Stranas</i>) 2018–2024	5 acceleration pillars	Gowa RAD adopts pillars of convergence, campaigns, and M&E	Needs innovation based on local wisdom

Table 1 illustrates the consistency between national mandates and regional adoption. The Gowa Regent Regulation replicates key national substances, including the target groups (adolescents, brides-to-be, pregnant women, and toddlers) and priority interventions (specific and sensitive nutrition). This confirms that, on paper (*das sollen*), there is no significant conflict or norm vacuum between the central and regional governments.

The findings indicate that the legal-normative harmonization between national and regional regulations in Gowa Regency is high, as Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023 formally references Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and incorporates national strategies, targets, and performance indicators into the regional policy framework. This synchronization is also reflected in the adoption of

convergence pillars, campaigns, and monitoring and evaluation activities, although technical implementation, such as data integration and cross-sector SOPs, remains under development. These results are consistent with the study by Partadisastra and Octaria (2023) in Bulungan Regency, which highlighted the importance of alignment between regional and national policies as a foundation for program success, and with Fitriani et al. (2024) in Semarang City, who demonstrated that effective cross-sectoral coordination supports the implementation of nutrition policies. Therefore, strong normative alignment combined with local adaptation enables Gowa Regency to advance the stunting reduction agenda, despite ongoing operational challenges.

3.2. Institutional Capacity and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Although normative synchronization is high, the transition from policy formulation to actual implementation (*das sein*) encounters complex challenges. Applying Van Meter and Van Horn’s policy implementation theory demonstrates that discrepancies often arise due to variations in resources, inter-organizational communication, and the dispositions of implementers (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). While the legal framework is well-aligned, technical synchronization remains incomplete, particularly in procedural aspects and the enforcement of SOPs (Prasetyo et al., 2023; Sevilla et al., 2024).

Field data indicate four critical mechanisms that mediate the relationship between regulation and implementation. First, cross-sectoral coordination remains a challenge; although Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023 mandates convergence, coordination among Regional Apparatus Organizations (*Organisasi Perangkat Daerah/OPD*) often fluctuates, and the effectiveness of the cross-sector forum depends more on the routine nature of meetings than on a systematized culture of collaboration (Government of Gowa Regency, 2023). Second, the TPPS serves as a vital institutional bridge, facilitating the translation of regulations into concrete actions such as the Stunting Deliberation (*Rembuk Stunting*) and the Healthy Kitchen to Overcome Stunting (*Dapur Sehat Atasi Stunting/DASHAT*) program. However, the optimal function of TPPS is sometimes constrained by the varying commitment levels of its members. Third, a significant challenge lies in data integration; discrepancies between health data and social agency data impede precise targeting, contradicting the mandate of Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 for integrated data. Budgeting constraints persist, as local budget (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah/APBD*) allocation mechanisms remain predominantly input-based despite regulatory encouragement of performance-based budgeting, creating a gap between strategic stunting-reduction goals and the flexibility of financial resources required for long-term interventions.

Table 2. Regulatory Synchronization of Presidential Regulation and Gowa Regulation

Aspect	Degree of Synchronization	Evidence / Implication
Legal-normative	High	Regent Regulation Number 5/2023 formally references Presidential Regulation Number 72/2021.
Policy Substance	Moderate–High	Local strategies reflect the national strategy but also include local adjustments (local food, KB).
Technical Procedure	Partial	Gaps in database integration and a lack of technical SOPs for cross-sector monitoring.
Governance	Moderate	TPPS is active, but effectiveness depends on individual capacity and routine coordination.

Table 2 illustrates the degree of synchronization between national and regional regulations on stunting reduction in Gowa Regency across four key dimensions. In

terms of legal-normative synchronization, alignment is high, as Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023 formally references Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021, providing a clear legal foundation for regional policy. Regarding policy substance, synchronization is moderate to high, local strategies generally follow the national strategy while incorporating context-specific adaptations, such as local food programs and family planning initiatives. Technical procedure synchronization remains partial, characterized by gaps in database integration and the absence of technical SOPs for cross-sector monitoring. In the governance dimension, synchronization is moderate. Although the TPPS is active, its effectiveness depends on individual member capacity and routine coordination rather than a fully institutionalized collaborative culture (Nahwan et al., 2025). The result highlights strengths in legal and strategic alignment alongside persistent operational and governance challenges.

The findings indicate that although legal-normative and strategic synchronization between Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023 is strong, operational and technical dimensions remain partially aligned, particularly regarding cross-sectoral coordination, data integration, SOPs, and budgeting mechanisms. Field evidence demonstrates that institutional mechanisms, such as TPPS, play a critical bridging role, yet their effectiveness is influenced by individual capacity and routine practices. These results are supported by previous studies by Partadisastra and Octaria (2023) emphasized the importance of alignment between national and regional policies for program success in Bulungan Regency, while Fitriani et al. (2024) highlighted the role of effective cross-sectoral coordination in Semarang City. Collectively, the evidence suggests that strong normative and strategic alignment, complemented by adaptive operational measures, is essential for advancing the stunting reduction agenda despite persistent implementation challenges.

3.3. Implications for Stunting Prevalence

The ultimate measure of regulatory synchronization is its impact on public health outcomes. Official data from the Government of Gowa Regency shows a significant decline in stunting prevalence from approximately 33% in 2022 to 17% in 2024 (Government of Gowa Regency, 2024). This reduction suggests that while technical challenges persist, the core regulatory framework has successfully provided the necessary legitimacy for resource mobilization and program execution.

However, the correlation between regulation and prevalence reduction is not linear. The decline is also attributed to intervention intensity, community mobilization, and external factors such as economic recovery. Within the framework of Collaborative Governance by Ansell and Gash (2008), the success in Gowa is driven by the involvement of non-state actors, including cadres and community leaders, who compensate for bureaucratic rigidities.

Based on these findings, this study proposes the concept of “Adaptive Synchronization,” which suggests that successful synchronization within a decentralized system like Indonesia does not require rigid, exact replication of national regulations. Instead, success relies on two key aspects. First, normative adherence, which entails strict compliance with national targets and principles. Second, operational flexibility, referring to the capacity of local governments to adjust implementation strategies for instance, leveraging local food wisdom through the DASHAT program instead of generic national food programs to align with local capacities and cultural contexts. Gowa Regency demonstrates that although administrative synchronization, such as SOPs and data integration, is still evolving, the application of strategic and adaptive synchronization has proven effective in advancing the stunting reduction agenda (Prasetyo et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that regulatory synchronization between Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 and Gowa Regent Regulation Number 5 of 2023 has been effectively established in legal-normative and strategic terms. The application of the adaptive synchronization model allows national policies to be implemented contextually by considering institutional capacity, socio-economic conditions, and local community characteristics. Field findings reveal that cross-sectoral coordination, the role of TPPS, inter-OPD data integration, and budgeting mechanisms still face operational challenges. Nevertheless, local adaptation and multi-stakeholder engagement have contributed to a reduction in stunting prevalence from 33 percent in 2022 to 17 percent in 2024. These results underscore the importance of combining normative-strategic alignment with operational flexibility to achieve successful policy implementation within a decentralized governance framework.

The implications of this study highlight that the success of stunting reduction acceleration requires strengthening human resource capacity, cross-sector SOPs, data integration, and output-based budgeting. Limitations of this study include its focus on the regency level and the absence of direct quantitative evaluation of program impacts at the village or household level. Future research is recommended to examine the micro-level effects of stunting reduction programs through both quantitative and qualitative approaches at the village level and compare the implementation of adaptive synchronization models across regions. Further studies could also explore the role of information technology and local innovations in enhancing data integration, cross-sectoral coordination, and resource allocation efficiency to support sustainable stunting reduction efforts in Indonesia.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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