



## Leveraging Tuan Guru's Standing Role: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok, Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** Stunting is a national health problem in toddlers that is currently a significant concern for the government. Stunting cases are still a problem that needs to be resolved and is increasing. This research aims to determine the actual conditions of stunting in East Lombok and the central role of the tuan guru figure in efforts to accelerate the handling of stunting in East Lombok. The method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach with 40 informants from 4 categories. The research results show that East Lombok Regency is the area with the most toddlers suffering from stunting in NTB based on February 2024 data, with Sikur District being a red zone with a prevalence of 30.33%. Prevention and handling of stunting are still carried out conventionally by relying on socialization and integrated health posts from health centers. The presence of the tuan guru figure amid community life who is a role model and role model for the community in everyday life is an alternative solution that can accelerate the reduction in stunting rates and maximize prevention efforts. Dramaturgical actions in front and behind the stage by the tuan guru can be an alternative solution to expedite the handling of stunting in East Lombok through preaching packaged concerning the general conditions of the target community. Parenting pattern intervention is the main target of Tuan Guru's preaching in terms of preventing and handling stunting to create healthy and prosperous families.

**Keywords:** Teacher, Dramaturgy, Stunting Prevention, East Lombok



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## INTRODUCTION

Stunting is defined as a condition in which children experience nutritional deficiencies that interfere with their growth so that their height does not match their age (Yadika et al., 2019). Poor dietary intake during the first thousand days of life is one of the main factors causing stunting in toddlers (Nemerimana et al., 2023). Not only does it cause the child's physical condition to be abnormal, but it also causes a decrease in the child's cognitive intelligence (Simamora et al., 2023; Ingtias et al., 2022). Currently, the government is paying close attention to the health problems of

## Leveraging Tuan Guru's Standing Role: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok, Indonesia

Harian, Qalbiy, Wahidah, Yuliana, and Nabani

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toddlers, known as stunting. This is indicated by the central government budget of IDR 94,350,930,373 for stunting prevention in 2019 ([Muchlis et al., 2022](#)). According to the latest data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health in 2023, the national stunting rate only fell by 0.1% from the previous year ([Nareswari, 2023; Nasir et al., 2021](#)). This places Indonesia as the second country with the highest cases of child stunting after Timor Leste ([Nareswari, 2023; Nasir et al., 2021](#)). The latest data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health shows that in 2023, the national stunting rate only fell by 0.1% from the previous year.

In 2022, East Lombok Regency had 20,890 toddlers diagnosed with stunting, the highest number in the region ([Ministry of State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023](#)). KKN students from the University of Mataram conducted conventional socialization activities in Pene Village, Jerowaru District ([Nurhidayah et al., 2023; Muvid et al., 2023](#)) and Sukaraja Village, Jerowaru District ([Fitri & Purba, 2023; Wuryantoro et al., 2023](#)). In addition, the Health Office also visited health centers to assess the performance of health centers in handling stunting in the area ([Saputri et al., 2023; Supsiloi et al., 2022; Wahidah et al., 2023](#)). Socialization and the role of the government are needed to eradicate stunting, as well as the role of other parties ([Rahman et al., 2023; PS et al., 2022](#)). In addition, the village government and health centers make several efforts, such as counseling on understanding symptoms or signs of stunting, monthly integrated health posts and providing additional food (PMT) in the form of eggs and meat.

In addition, there is an alternative approach to dealing with stunting, especially in East Lombok, namely utilizing the role and influence of the kibar ulama or tuan guru. Until now, the community still believes in the existence of tuan guru in Lombok, who are considered knowledgeable, charismatic, and worthy of being role models ([Rohimi, 2021; Amal et al., 2022](#)). Thus, the tuan guru is regarded by the people of Lombok as someone who has an important role (leading role) in community life, especially in the spiritual, religious, and social fields ([Saparudin, 2022](#)). In rural and urban areas, some groups even view a religious leader too fanatically, which can lead to an intolerant attitude toward others ([Prastivi, 2019; Purba et al., 2019](#)), such as the fact that many religious leaders can have an impact on the emergence of an intolerant attitude towards other individuals ([Lesmana & Syafig, 2022](#)). With the condition of society, which is still traditional, this research will use the Tuan Guru as a figure who can provide knowledge so society can avoid stunting. As A'yuna and Nurdin (2016) state, fanaticism is behavior based on beliefs without a basis in theory or scientific facts. By utilizing the culture of the Lombok community, which still believes in the tuan guru, the problem of stunting can be overcome and even eliminated in East Lombok.

Nowadays, the standing role of the tuan guru has been modified. The community not only views the tuan guru as a religious figure but also as a reference and role model in determining political attitudes, educational motivation, and even attention to the importance of health ([Huda, 2018; Machmud et al., 2022; Syafrizal et al., 2022](#)). The fanaticism of some groups in society towards "Tuan Guru" figures, along with the modification of the standing role of Tuan Guru in Lombok, can be used as a solution to deal with stunting problems, especially in East Lombok. Based on research by Ikrar Fajri (2024) entitled "Communication Strategy of Religious Figures in Accelerating Stunting Reduction in West Pasaman Regency" discusses the steps, strategies, and obstacles to communication of religious figures in delivering campaigns about stunting in West

Pasaman Regency. The novelty of this study, in comparison to previous research, is to see how the role of Tuan Guru through the Dramaturgy approach can prevent stunting. Of course, fundamental differences exist between this research and the research that will be carried out. Therefore, this study aims to analyze Utilizing the Permanent Role of Tuan Guru: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok.

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted using a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Researchers used a phenomenological approach because it can more quickly reveal data and facts about the critical role of tuan guru, which is believed to be able to change the mindset and behavior patterns of the East Lombok community in preventing and handling stunting. After all, the database is taken from the real experiences of individuals and community groups ([Febrina, 2019](#); [Wantu et al., 2021](#)). Data collection techniques were carried out by observation and interviews to obtain primary data and literature studies to obtain secondary data. Observations were conducted at the East Lombok Health Office and three health centers in the East Lombok area. The research sample focused on four categories of informants, namely heads of health centers, tuan guru figures, and parents who have stunted children. The study used a qualitative method to explain descriptively and clearly related to the research problem. The results of interviews related to the research problem will be analyzed and described in this study.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

East Lombok is the most densely populated district in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2023, the population of East Lombok will be 1,391,382 people. This condition is a challenge because it will impact cross-sectoral activities that require more significant effort, such as the economy, infrastructure development, education, tourism, and health, which is the biggest challenge. Stunting is a health issue that is the government's primary concern when handling it compared to other health issues or diseases.

Based on data released by the NTB Regional Secretariat's Social Welfare Bureau, as of February 2024, East Lombok was the district with the 2nd highest prevalence of stunting out of 10 districts/cities in NTB with a percentage of 16.18%, with North Lombok in first place with a percentage of 18.03%. Sikur District and Sakra District are the areas with the highest stunting rates based on data in August 2023 ([East Lombok Health Office, 2023](#)). This percentage cannot be interpreted as meaning that the number of stunted toddlers in East Lombok is less than in North Lombok because North Lombok only has a population of 257,866 people or less than 20% of the population of East Lombok.

So far, the acceleration of stunting management in East Lombok still relies on conventional strategies such as integrated health posts (posyandu), counseling activities, and providing additional food. However, the stunting rate in East Lombok has remained relatively high because these methods only focus on efforts to improve maternal and child diet and health patterns. At the same

time, the logical framework of the causes of stunting also concerns parenting patterns that must be considered early on, even before young women get married. Therefore, to create good parenting patterns, a figure who is a role model and a leading example in society is needed, such as a religious figure commonly called a tuan guru by the Lombok community.

The Sasak people in Lombok still firmly believe that the tuan guru figure is an intelligent and wise figure who is full of authority (Sulhan & Lessy, 2022; Wahidah et al., 2022; Napitu et al., 2020). The authority of the teacher who forms a "branding" in the community so that it becomes a reference and role model cannot be separated from the educational background, preaching methods, and hereditary factors. This is stated by a group of informants in Jerowaru Village, Jerowaru District, whom researchers interviewed.

*"For us, the figure of the tuan guru is still the primary role model in daily life, especially in religious matters. Several tuan guru or Ustadz (because they have not performed the hajj) in Jerowaru Village, such as Tuan Guru Saep, Tuan Guru Badar, Tuan Guru Nasihin, Tuan Guru Abdul Aziz, and Tuan Guru Amrullah, are our primary references, especially with the way they convey and the content of their studies are very easy to understand in the language of the people here.."*

Similar statements were also expressed by several residents of Rumbuk Timur Village, Sakra District, while in Montong Baan Village, Sikur District, several informants who were met said that there was no guru or religious figure around them who could guide and protect them. A group of informants consisting of two teenage girls and five mothers in Rumbuk Timur Village said :

*"Of course, what the Ustadz or guru says will be obeyed as long as it is good, not only in religious matters but also in social matters, which are usually closely related to religious orders. Here, we know Ustadz Khairi as a religious figure who often provides spiritual guidance with his humorous but meaningful lecture style."*

In addition, researchers also explored community knowledge about stunting, which already knew what stunting is, its characteristics, causes, and the risks it poses. All informants from 3 sub-districts said that their knowledge of stunting was obtained through integrated health post activities and counseling provided by the health center, and there was even a Stunting School program initiated by the Sakra Health Center with young couples as participants. As expressed by one of the informants, the program was considered very helpful, especially by mothers with children with stunting :

*"After I found out that my child had stunting, I immediately consulted with the health center and was advised to join the Stunting School program. There, we were given directions on managing children's diets and actions to reduce the risk of stunting. Many young mothers also participated in the activity to prevent the birth of children with malnutrition."*

East Lombok is the district with the best stunting handling performance in NTB (Zarwandi, 2024), but compared to other regions, the number of toddlers with stunting in East Lombok remains the highest. Stunting has become a national scale problem, especially since the health aspect is one of the benchmarks or indicators of the quality of human resources in a region. Stunting will not be resolved if handling it is only delegated to the government and health agencies, but massive and inclusive cross-sectoral collaboration is needed through a convergence approach. According to KBBI, convergence means a state towards a meeting point; centralized. From the perspective of

handling stunting, convergence can mean an approach through cross-sectoral interventions, both government, private sector, figures, and society in general, which are carried out in an integrated, coordinated, and joint manner ([Hermawan et al., 2023](#); [Ampera et al., 2020](#); [Amin et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, every group and even individual will feel responsible for taking part in eradicating stunting cases.

The East Lombok Regency Government has taken the convergence action to accelerate the reduction in stunting rates. Still, the convergence only involves the government sector. In contrast, non-governmental organizations, Islamic boarding schools, or influential individual figures in the community have not been involved, even though the community will feel closer if information or an invitation is delivered directly by those who are part of the community itself, such as the figure of a

Tuan, the guru for the Sasak community in Lombok, is a charismatic figure ([Mansyur & Mas'ud, 2024](#)) who has been branded as a standing role, so he is used as the primary role model for the community compared to other figures. The nickname "Island of a Thousand Mosques" for Lombok Island indicates that Lombok has many mosques and automatically indicates that Lombok is filled with a majority of Muslims. This condition makes religious figures with the label Tuan Guru highly respected. One informant said:

*“For those of us who live in villages where education is arguably lacking, the guru figure is central because we believe that those close to God are the people we should emulate in this worldly life.”*

The preaching strategy of the religious instructor will significantly determine how society views the individual. In facing the challenges of the times, the preaching of the tuan guru in Lombok has also undergone several changes, both in terms of actions and the narrative of the preaching delivered. The preaching message will reach the hearts of the listeners/congregation by having to be adjusted to the conditions of the community in that place, even though it forces the tuan guru to be dramatic or not show his true character when dealing with the congregation. From a social perspective, this action is closely related to the dramaturgy theory initiated by Erving Goffman. Dramaturgy is the action of someone acting as an actor in social life, focusing on considering profit or loss for himself ([Girfanfa & Susilo, 2022](#); [Sutiah et al., 2021](#)). Actors in dramaturgy will play the roles of the front and backstage to achieve the desired goals ([Fitri, 2015](#)). The tuan guru will display the front stage or backstage actions depending on the conditions of the community that is the field of his preaching.

Dramaturgy is often used by politicians in formulating political strategies ([Saaduddin et al., 2024](#); [Ingtias et al., 2021](#)) to attract the attention and support of citizens and smooth the political goals of individuals or groups. In its development, dramaturgy for self-branding is no longer just a political need but also spreads toward social actions and interactions in other aspects of life, such as education and health. The social dramaturgy actions adopted by the tuan guru in Lombok differ from those of politicians. Politicians usually do dramaturgy from the front of the stage when the legislative or executive election period is near and will return to their roles behind the stage when the election of executive or legislative candidates ends. The dramaturgy of the tuan guru is carried out continuously. It refers to the welfare of the people without any specific goals for individuals

and solely because of obedience to religious orders. One informant from the Tuan guru community stated :

*“Da'wah is not only the task of the Ustadz or tuan guru alone, but in the Qur'an, the general wording of the verse explains that everyone has the responsibility to da'wah. Sometimes people interpret da'wah only from the pulpit, even though we tell our friends to pray is already da'wah.”*

Tuan guru is an Islamic religious leader in Lombok who is considered the most vital figure to emulate and learn from. The community usually gives the title of tuan guru to the founders or leaders of Islamic boarding schools ([Smith, 2014](#)) with deep religious knowledge and a large mass base. The title Tuan Guru in ancient times had strict requirements, including studying religion in the Middle East. However, over time, these unwritten requirements have become looser. Currently, everyone who has performed the Hajj pilgrimage and then equipped with religious knowledge that is considered adequate and established an Islamic boarding school has the requirements to receive the title of tuan guru met ([Fitriani, 2016; Amin et al., 2021](#)). Even in reality, the requirement to establish an Islamic boarding school is no longer an indicator. An Ustadz or kayak that has performed the Hajj pilgrimage will receive the title tuan guru if he has a solid mass base of followers.

Tuan guru in Lombok, especially in East Lombok, often plays the role of an actor in front and behind the stage. The behind-the-scenes action of the tuan guru in East Lombok is to show his true character as a highly charismatic religious leader with the typical appearance of a preacher in general. Usually, the behind-the-scenes drama will be played when he is dealing with a congregation that has studied for a long time, who already knows the figure of the tuan guru more closely so that he does not need to change his personality or characteristics in teaching. The knowledge the old congregation studies is also usually religious knowledge at a higher level and more in-depth discussion. Meanwhile, the front-stage drama of the tuan guru in East Lombok will be shown when they are dealing with a congregation that is lay or has just met his figure for the first time, so the tuan guru will arrange a different preaching strategy to attract the attention and interest of the congregation. The role of the tuan guru behind the stage has no motive to gain many followers intentionally, so there is an opportunity to get a rupiah from the congregation. The teachers did this solely in the hope of a reward from God for carrying out the command to preach and invite many people to the path of religion. Still, without realizing it, this sincerity was why sustenance flowed from unexpected directions.

The dramaturgy of the tuan guru in East Lombok is divided into two categories: first, verbal dramaturgy, and second, action dramaturgy. Verbal dramaturgy is carried out by modifying the language and method of conveying the message of da'wah to the community. This is as done by TGH. Dr. Sirajun Nasihin and TGH. Gausil Kahfi Amrullah in Jerowaru has a da'wah field up to Keruak District and its surroundings. The community likes the two Tuan guru because of their intelligence in preaching in refined Sasak language and simple analogies that immediately hit the mind. Meanwhile, action dramaturgy is carried out by modifying the role and appearance of TGH. Badarul Islam Sibawaihi from Jerowaru has a congregation base up to Central Lombok Regency and TGH. Khairi is from Sakra, with a congregation base up to West Sakra and Selong Districts.

## Leveraging Tuan Guru's Standing Role: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok, Indonesia

Harian, Qalbiy, Wahidah, Yuliana, and Nabani

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The presence of the *tuan guru* figure considered a standing role by the Sasak Lombok community, can be used as a precise strategy for preventing and reducing stunting rates through revitalizing parenting patterns, especially in the East Lombok region. Because *Tuan Guru* has the charisma to convey messages to the community (Alkaf et al., 2022). Moreover, with the condition of the majority of the community living in rural areas with a powerful metaphysical mindset or belief in divinity, social, economic, and health issues that are spiced up with religious narratives by role models who are role models will open up more significant opportunities in resolving existing problems, one of which is stunting. Therefore, it is essential to have a more massive role for the *tuan guru* by collaborating with the government to resolve the problem of stunting from revitalizing parenting patterns. With good parenting patterns, parents or prospective parents will pay more attention to family health so that children are born with sufficient nutrition.

There are many local community figures who can be used as media to overcome stunting problems in children (Beal et al., 2018). This study only looks at the role of *Tuan Guru* as a community figure. *Tuan Guru* is considered to provide benefits in overcoming the problem of stunting in East Lombok. By utilizing *Tuan Guru* through his dramaturgy, it is hoped that the community will follow the direction of the figure. *Tuan Guru* has become a significant figure for traditional communities, so it is expected that this condition can suppress or reduce the problem of stunting. Of course, this study was only conducted in East Lombok, so further research is needed to determine whether other strategies need to be carried out to overcome the problem of stunting through community figures.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the central role referred to as *Tuan Guru* is an advantage that can be used as an alternative solution to increase the decline's acceleration rate and prevent stunting. *Tuan Guru*, seen as a figure who is always there and a role model in society, can significantly reduce stunting rates through verbal and action dramaturgy preaching strategies. Specifically, the role of teachers in accelerating the handling of stunting is focused on interventions to improve parenting patterns that will create healthy and prosperous families. Through the role of *Tuan Guru*, the process of handling stunting seems significant and beneficial. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis is needed for researchers to continue to utilize *Tuan Guru* to suppress the decline in stunting problems.

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## **Leveraging Tuan Guru's Standing Role: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok, Indonesia**

Harian, Qalbiy, Wahidah, Yuliana, and Nabani

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## Leveraging Tuan Guru's Standing Role: A Dramaturgical Approach to Stunting Prevention in East Lombok, Indonesia

Harian, Qalbiy, Wahidah, Yuliana, and Nabani

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