



## The Experiences of Women in Supporting Posyandu Programs as a Form of Community Health Empowerment in Urban Indonesia

Moehammad Iqbal Sultan

Universitas Hasanuddin, Indonesia

[iqbalsultan@unhas.ac.id](mailto:iqbalsultan@unhas.ac.id)

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 25-01-2025

Revised 07-02-2025

Accepted 14-02-2025

#### Keyword:

Health Education; Community Empowerment; Posyandu; Women's Experiences; Public Health.

### ABSTRACT

Community health programs, such as Posyandu in Indonesia, play a vital role in promoting maternal and child health by empowering local women as health cadres. Despite extensive documentation of operational outcomes, the subjective experiences of these cadres remain underexplored, particularly in urban areas with socio-cultural and logistical challenges. This phenomenological study explores the motivations, barriers and aspirations of Posyandu cadres in urban communities through in-depth interview with [number] participants. The findings reveal that, despite facing challenges like insufficient family support and logistical constraints, cadres experience a strong sense of empowerment and social purpose. They also express a need for enhanced training and formal recognition to sustain their engagement. This research provides insights into the socio-cultural dynamics that influence health program participation, offering valuable implications for policymakers and program designers.



©2024 Authors. Published by PT Mukhlisina Revolution Center.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

## INTRODUCTION

Community health initiatives have long been recognized as pivotal in improving public health outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Adelia & Susanto, 2020). Among these initiatives, Posyandu (integrated health service posts) represents a grassroots effort aimed at enhancing maternal and child health by leveraging community participation. The program relies heavily on the voluntary engagement of local women, known as cadres, who play a crucial role in promoting health education, monitoring growth, and facilitating preventive care services. Despite its strategic importance, the success of Posyandu is intrinsically linked to the active involvement and empowerment of these women within their communities.

Urban health challenges, such as overcrowding, limited access to healthcare facilities, and socio-economic disparities, exacerbate the complexities of health promotion efforts in cities. These challenges make it particularly important to understand how urban Posyandu cadres navigate their roles within these environments. The concept of community empowerment underpins many health promotion frameworks, highlighting the significance of equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to address health disparities. Literature suggests that community-based health programs can achieve greater sustainability and impact when they integrate the voices and experiences of their participants. However, much of the existing research has focused on quantitative assessments, such as program coverage and service utilization rates, leaving a critical gap in understanding the subjective experiences and intrinsic motivations of the individuals driving these initiatives.

This gap becomes especially apparent in urban settings, where socio-cultural and logistical barriers further complicate the role of Posyandu cadres. Despite the significance of their work, the personal and emotional dimensions of their involvement remain largely unexplored. While phenomenology has been recognized as a valuable method for investigating subjective experiences,

particularly in contexts with complex socio-cultural dynamics, it has been underutilized in the study of urban health initiatives like Posyandu.

This study aims to fill this gap by employing a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of Posyandu cadres in urban Indonesia. By focusing on how these women perceive their roles, navigate challenges, and find meaning in their contributions, this research addresses critical gaps in the literature. Furthermore, it highlights the need for contextually relevant health interventions that account for the specific socio-cultural dynamics of urban environments. The study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the motivations, barriers, and aspirations of these women, offering valuable insights for improving policy and practice in urban health settings.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Study Design**

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the subjective experiences of women actively involved in Posyandu programs in urban areas. Phenomenology was chosen as it focuses on understanding the lived experiences of individuals, providing rich insights into the meanings and perceptions associated with a particular phenomenon (Has dkk., 2024). This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how participants perceive and interpret their roles within the community health initiatives. Specifically, the study adopted an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA), which emphasizes the co-construction of meaning through the researcher's interpretation of participants' lived experiences. This design was particularly relevant to uncovering the nuanced challenges, opportunities, and personal significance associated with the participants' contributions to Posyandu.

### **Participants**

Participants were women aged 25–50 years who were actively involved as Posyandu cadres in urban settings. The inclusion criterion of at least two years of experience was selected to ensure that participants had sufficient exposure to the dynamics of Posyandu programs, enabling them to provide in-depth insights into their roles and the challenges they encountered. This duration was deemed appropriate to capture the evolution of their experiences and perceptions, as women with less experience might not have encountered the full range of challenges and opportunities present in their roles. Participants also needed to be willing to engage in in-depth interviews (Palutturi dkk., 2021). Exclusion criteria included individuals with conflicts of interest related to the study or those unable to provide informed consent. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure the selection of participants with rich and diverse experiences. The final sample comprised 10 participants who met the eligibility criteria, representing a range of socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, thereby enriching the understanding of the phenomenon.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in a private and comfortable environment to ensure participants' openness. An interview guide, developed based on the study objectives, was used to facilitate the discussions. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were conducted in participants' local language, ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance. Questions focused on participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions of their roles in Posyandu programs. The sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Observational notes were also maintained to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Data collection occurred over a three-month period, and efforts were made to create a safe and non-judgmental environment to encourage honest sharing.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, tailored for phenomenological studies. This process involved systematic steps, including familiarization with the data through repeated readings of the transcripts, generating initial codes, organizing codes into

themes, and interpreting these themes in the context of the phenomenon under study (Panjaitan & Partasasmita, 2020). The analysis aimed to identify patterns of meaning that reflected the participants' lived experiences. To ensure rigor, the analysis process was iterative, and emergent themes were cross-validated with the raw data. Themes such as "empowerment through participation," "barriers to effective implementation," and "aspirations for improvement" emerged as central to the participants' experiences. NVivo software was utilized to manage and organize the coding process, enhancing the efficiency and traceability of the analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant institutional ethics committee prior to data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, and potential implications of the study and provided written informed consent (Puspitasari dkk., 2022). Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning pseudonyms to participants and securely storing all data. The study adhered to international ethical standards, including the Declaration of Helsinki, ensuring respect for participants' rights and dignity throughout the research process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Empowerment through Participation in Posyandu**

The experience of participating in Posyandu programs emerged as a significant source of empowerment for the women involved. Many participants described their roles as pivotal in fostering community well-being, emphasizing their contributions to maternal and child health. One participant stated, "I feel valued because I can help other mothers and children in my neighborhood." This sense of purpose and recognition bolstered their confidence and motivated them to remain actively involved.

The findings revealed that participants perceived their contributions as a way to bridge gaps in healthcare access, especially for vulnerable populations. This empowered them not only as individuals but also as agents of change within their communities. Despite the challenges, participants highlighted a profound sense of fulfillment derived from their roles, which reinforced their commitment to the program.

### **Barriers to Effective Implementation**

Despite their dedication, the participants faced significant barriers in fulfilling their roles effectively. Many mentioned a lack of familial support, time constraints, and logistical challenges as recurring obstacles. For example, one participant shared, "It is sometimes hard to balance household responsibilities with Posyandu activities." Another noted the difficulty of managing limited resources, such as the absence of adequate training and tools, which hindered their ability to provide optimal support.

Cultural and social norms also played a role in shaping these barriers. Participants frequently encountered resistance from community members who undervalued or misunderstood the importance of health education. One participant recounted, "Some mothers are hesitant to follow health advice, and it takes a lot of patience to convince them about immunizations." To address the barrier of familial support, systemic interventions could include the development of community-based support networks for cadres, where family members are also engaged in understanding and valuing the role of Posyandu cadres. Programs that involve the family in training and support could alleviate the burden on cadres and create a more supportive environment. Additionally, local policies could consider offering time-saving solutions or compensation schemes to reduce the impact of time constraints on participants. These challenges underscored the need for systemic support to enhance the effectiveness of Posyandu programs.

### **Aspirations and Proposed Solutions**

Participants expressed a strong desire for more comprehensive training and support systems to enhance their capacities. Many emphasized the importance of ongoing education to stay updated

with the latest health practices and to build confidence in their roles. One participant remarked, “I hope there will be more training sessions to improve our skills and knowledge.”

Additionally, participants highlighted the need for formal recognition and tangible incentives to sustain their motivation. While the intrinsic rewards of contributing to community health were acknowledged, external validation was seen as crucial for long-term engagement. Some suggested collaborative efforts with local authorities to address logistical challenges and improve access to resources, ensuring the sustainability of Posyandu initiatives.

### **Conclusion of Themes**

The narratives gathered from participants revealed a complex interplay of empowerment, challenges, and aspirations in their experiences with Posyandu. While the program provided a platform for meaningful contributions, systemic barriers often limited its impact. The findings highlighted the importance of addressing these challenges to unlock the full potential of community health initiatives. Participants’ aspirations for better training and recognition underscore the need for targeted interventions to strengthen the program’s foundation and ensure its sustainability.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

This study revealed that Posyandu cadres derive a deep sense of empowerment and purpose from their roles, despite facing significant challenges (Rinawan dkk., 2022). The findings address the research questions by highlighting the intrinsic motivations, barriers, and aspirations of women actively involved in community health initiatives, providing valuable insights into their lived experiences.

### **Contribution to Research Questions**

The research findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how Posyandu cadres perceive and navigate their roles (Rinawan dkk., 2021). The study addresses the first research question by uncovering the ways in which women experience empowerment through their contributions to maternal and child health. Participants described feelings of fulfillment and recognition, which reinforced their commitment to community service. In response to the second research question, the study identified key challenges, including limited family support, time constraints, and logistical barriers. These issues highlight the complex interplay between personal and systemic factors that influence participation. For the third research question, the findings show that participants interpret their roles as a meaningful way to contribute to the collective well-being of their communities, even as they advocate for more training and resources to enhance their effectiveness.

### **Relation to Literature and Theoretical Frameworks**

The study's findings align with the principles of community empowerment theory, which posits that individuals who are engaged in collective health initiatives often experience increased self-efficacy and social cohesion (Salsabiila dkk., 2021). Similar to previous research in community-based health programs, this study confirms that empowerment is both a process and an outcome of active participation. However, the findings also extend the literature by emphasizing the unique socio-cultural and urban-specific barriers faced by Indonesian women in Posyandu contexts, such as gendered expectations and resource limitations. This study complements existing phenomenological research by providing nuanced insights into the subjective experiences of cadres, highlighting the critical role of emotional labor and the need for systemic support mechanisms.

While existing quantitative studies have focused on programmatic outcomes, this research underscores the importance of integrating subjective perspectives to create more inclusive and responsive health interventions (Santy dkk., 2024). It also advances the understanding of how social dynamics influence the effectiveness of community health programs, contributing to a richer theoretical dialogue about empowerment and participation in diverse contexts.

### **Implications of Findings**

The findings of this study have significant implications for both theory and practice in community health promotion. From a scientific perspective, the experiences of Posyandu cadres

underscore the importance of fostering empowerment as a key driver for sustaining engagement in community health programs. The study reveals that empowerment is not only an individual process but also a collective phenomenon that strengthens social ties and fosters trust within communities. Practically, the insights suggest the need for tailored interventions that address the socio-cultural and logistical barriers identified, such as limited family support and time constraints. Policymakers and program designers should prioritize capacity-building initiatives, including comprehensive training and resource allocation, to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of Posyandu programs. Additionally, these findings highlight the potential for replication in other community-based health initiatives, particularly in settings with similar socio-economic and cultural dynamics.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study, while insightful, has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, the sample size, though sufficient for a phenomenological inquiry, limits the generalizability of findings to broader populations. The research focused exclusively on urban settings, which may differ significantly from rural or semi-urban contexts in terms of challenges and opportunities. Second, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, as participants may have framed their experiences in a positive light. Finally, while interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is ideal for uncovering lived experiences, its subjective nature may influence the interpretation of findings, underscoring the importance of contextualizing results within the specific cultural and social environment of the study.

### **Prospects for Future Research**

This study opens several avenues for future research to deepen understanding and expand the scope of community health initiatives. Future studies could explore the experiences of Posyandu cadres in rural or remote areas to provide a comparative perspective on the influence of geographic and cultural differences (Susanto dkk., 2019). Longitudinal research may also shed light on how the motivations and challenges of cadres evolve over time, offering insights into the long-term sustainability of their engagement. Additionally, integrating mixed-method approaches could provide a more holistic understanding of the interplay between subjective experiences and quantifiable program outcomes. By building on the findings of this study, future research can contribute to developing more inclusive, effective, and culturally sensitive strategies for empowering community health workers.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study explored the lived experiences of Posyandu cadres in urban Indonesia, focusing on their perceptions, challenges, and aspirations within the context of community health promotion. The findings revealed that cadres derive a profound sense of empowerment and purpose from their roles, despite facing significant barriers such as limited family support, logistical challenges, and cultural resistance. These findings have important implications for policy and practice, particularly in designing interventions that address these barriers and maximize the impact of Posyandu programs. By employing a phenomenological approach, the research captured the nuanced realities of their experiences, offering insights that extend beyond the quantitative evaluations common in previous studies. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, such as enhanced training and systemic support, to sustain and amplify the contributions of community health workers. The study contributes to bridging the gap in literature by highlighting the socio-cultural dimensions of health promotion and their impact on program success. Future research could build on these results by examining rural contexts or employing longitudinal methods to track changes in motivation and engagement over time, thereby enriching the understanding of community health dynamics.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## REFERENCES

- Adelia, S., & Susanto, J. C. (2020). Mid-upper arm circumference measurement for severe malnutrition screening in underfives. *Paediatrica Indonesiana(Paediatrica Indonesiana)*, 60(1), 42–52. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.14238/pi60.1.2020.42-52>
- Bandzuh, J. T., Ernst, K. C., Gunn, J. K. L., Pandarangga, S., Yowi, L. R. K., Hobgen, S., Cavanaugh, K. R., Kalaway, R. Y., Kalunga, N. R. J., Killa, M. F., Ara, U. H., Uejio, C. K., & Hayden, M. H. (2022). Knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Anopheles mosquito control through insecticide treated nets and community-based health programs to prevent malaria in East Sumba Island, Indonesia. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 2(9). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0000241>
- Cintyamina, U., Azizatunnisa', L., Ahmad, R. A., & Mahendradhata, Y. (2021). Scaling up public health interventions: Case study of the polio immunization program in Indonesia. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-10647-6>
- Ekadinata, N., Hsu, H.-C., Chen, Y.-M., & Chuang, K.-Y. (2023). Effects of social capital on healthcare utilization among older adults in Indonesia. *Health Promotion International*, 38(5). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daad104>
- Faza, A., Rinawan, F. R., Mutyara, K., Purnama, W. G., Ferdian, D., Susanti, A. I., Indraswari, N., & Fatimah, S. N. (2022). Posyandu Application in Indonesia: From Health Informatics Data Quality Bridging Bottom-Up and Top-Down Policy Implementation. *Informatics*, 9(4). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics9040074>
- Ginting, S., Afniwati, A., & Yufdel, Y. (2021). The Effect of Brain GYM on the Dementia and Depression Reduction of the Elderly. *Journal of Advanced Pharmacy Education and Research*, 11(2), 40–44. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.51847/Cj6189cIbl>
- Has, E. M. M., Krisnana, I., & Efendi, F. (2024). Enhancing Maternal Caregiving Capabilities Model to Prevent Childhood Stunting: A UNICEF-Inspired Model. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 10. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608231226061>
- Palutturi, S., Saleh, L. M., Rachmat, M., & Malek, J. A. (2021). Mapping healthy aisles in Makassar city, Indonesia: Implications for community empowerment. *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 35, S42–S45. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2020.12.012>
- Panjaitan, R. G. P., & Partasasmita, R. (2020). Indigenous knowledge of the people in karya usaha hamlet (Kubu raya, west kalimantan, indonesia) on the processing and diversity of plants that enhance toddler's appetite. *Biodiversitas*, 21(9), 4284–4290. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d210946>
- Puspitasari, I. W., Rinawan, F. R., Purnama, W. G., Susiarno, H., & Susanti, A. I. (2022). Development of a Chatbot for Pregnant Women on a Posyandu Application in Indonesia: From Qualitative Approach to Decision Tree Method. *Informatics*, 9(4). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics9040088>
- Rinawan, F. R., Faza, A., Susanti, A. I., Purnama, W. G., Indraswari, N., Ferdian, D., Fatimah, S. N., Purbasari, A., Zulianto, A., Sari, A. N., Yulita, I. N., Rabbi, M. F. A., & Ridwana, R. (2022). Posyandu Application for Monitoring Children Under-Five: A 3-Year Data Quality Map in Indonesia. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, 11(7). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijgi11070399>
- Rinawan, F. R., Susanti, A. I., Amelia, I., Ardisasmita, M. N., Dewi, R. K., Ferdian, D., Purnama, W. G., & Purbasari, A. (2021). Understanding mobile application development and implementation for monitoring Posyandu data in Indonesia: A 3-year hybrid action study to

- build “a bridge” from the community to the national scale. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11035-w>
- Salsabiila, S. V., Santosa, Q., Indriani, V., Arifah, K., & Setyono, J. (2021). Correlation between Birth Length, Growth, and Development among Children in Rempoah Village Banyumas, Central Java, Indonesia. *Althea Medical Journal*, 8(4), 188–192. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.15850/amj.v8n4.2369>
- Santy, W. H., Setiyowati, E., Putri, R. A., & Damawiyah, S. (2024). ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL DEMOGRAPHY, BEHAVIORAL HYGIENE, BREAST MILK, AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS IN CHILDREN WITH DIARRHEA IN SURABAYA CITY. *Revista de Gestao Social e Ambiental*, 18(5). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n5-066>
- Susanto, T., Yunanto, R. A., Rasny, H., Susumaningrum, L. A., & Nur, K. R. M. (2019). Promoting Children Growth and Development: A community-based cluster randomized controlled trial in rural areas of Indonesia. *Public Health Nursing*, 36(4), 514–524. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phn.12620>