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Stunting in Children Aged 0-5 Years: A Literature Review on Prevention and Control Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a significant public health issue affecting children under five years old, leading to long-term consequences on growth and development. The method used in this study is Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Research conducted systematically by following the rules with the flow of literature review to avoid subjective misunderstandings from researchers. The data used in the study are sourced from national and international scientific publication databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar and Science Direct. The search keywords for the article are arranged based on the PICOS Framework, the keywords are "stunting in children 0-5 years", "stunting prevention" and "stunting control strategy". The review identified the effective interventions highlighted include promoting exclusive breastfeeding, improving maternal nutrition, and implementing community-based nutrition programs. Additionally, the role of education and awareness in fostering healthy dietary practices among families was emphasized. The results of the review conducted on 3 national journal articles and 11 international journal articles indicate that strategies for the prevention and control of stunting must include a holistic approach that involves health promotion, nutritional improvement, sanitation enhancement, community empowerment, and the increase of parental self-efficacy. It is hoped that the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia will continue to decline, thereby improving the quality of future human resources to realize a competitive Golden Generation of Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Stunting among children aged 0–5 years remains a persistent global health challenge, with a prevalence of 22.3% in 2022, and more than 85% of cases concentrated in Asia and Africa (Gabain, Ramsteijn, & Webster, 2023; Tamir et al., 2024). This condition affects not only physical growth but also contributes to cognitive impairments, increased risk of chronic

diseases in adulthood, and national economic losses of up to 3% of GDP (Mustakim et al., 2022). According to the World Health Organization, approximately 155 million children under five are stunted worldwide, which equates to one in four children in this age group (WHO, 2023). Recent studies have established a significant association between stunting and developmental delays, showing that stunted children are 3.6 times more likely to experience motor and cognitive delays (Mustakim et al., 2022; Suratri et al., 2023). The intergenerational consequences and complex etiologies—including chronic malnutrition, recurrent infections, and environmental factors—make stunting prevention a critical priority within the Sustainable Development Goals (Agri et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, the stunting prevalence reached 21.6% in 2022, the highest in Southeast Asia, although a decrease from 24.4% in 2021 was noted (Rahmadiani, Fibriana, & Azam, 2024). In 2023, it declined slightly to 21.5%, but this figure still falls short of the 2020–2024 National Mid-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) target of 14% by 2024 and the WHO threshold of less than 20%. According to the Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) data from 38 provinces, only 14 provinces reported stunting prevalence below the national average (Rahmadiani, Fibriana, & Azam, 2024). The three provinces with the highest prevalence are Central Papua (39.4%), East Nusa Tenggara (37.9%), and Highland Papua (37.3%) (Suratri et al., 2023). The high incidence in these regions is primarily attributed to factors such as low maternal education, rural residency, and inadequate feeding practices. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation by reducing household purchasing power, thereby hindering government-led stunting reduction efforts (Rahmadiani, Fibriana, & Azam, 2024).

The impact of stunting on child development is evident in a 2021 study conducted in Surabaya, which found that stunted children aged 1–3 years had a 4.75 times higher risk of experiencing developmental delays compared to their non-stunted peers (Mustakim et al., 2022). Nutritional deficits during the critical window of the first 1,000 days of life disrupt synaptic and motor development, often leading to irreversible consequences (Suratri et al., 2023). These findings are supported by Soliman et al. (2021), who reported a long-term decline in motor and cognitive scores associated with stunting. In certain local contexts, such as East Nusa Tenggara, unique contributing factors include early introduction of complementary feeding in 65% of children and limited access to clean water. Multivariate studies have identified child age (24–35 months, OR = 2.08) and low maternal education (OR = 1.57) as key predictors of stunting. These conditions call for culturally sensitive interventions, including intensive maternal nutrition education programs and community-based growth monitoring (Suratri et al., 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a comprehensive literature review on the strategies for preventing and controlling stunting in children aged 0–5 years. The findings are expected to provide meaningful contributions to policymakers and health program implementers in their efforts to reduce the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The review process was conducted systematically, following a structured and standardized literature

review framework to minimize subjective bias and misinterpretation by the researchers. The data sources consisted of scientific publication databases, both national and international, including PubMed, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The literature review was conducted independently by six authors. A flow diagram based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework was utilized to illustrate the journal article search and selection process. The keywords used for the article search were developed based on the PICOS framework, with search terms including: "stunting in children 0–5 years", "stunting prevention", and "stunting control strategy." The inclusion criteria for this review were journal articles discussing strategies for the prevention and control of stunting among children aged 0–5 years, published between 2019 and 2024. Exclusion criteria included: paid-access articles, textbooks, articles written in languages other than English and Indonesian, and studies unrelated to stunting. Based on the screening process, only 14 full-text articles from national and international journals were considered relevant and included in the final review.

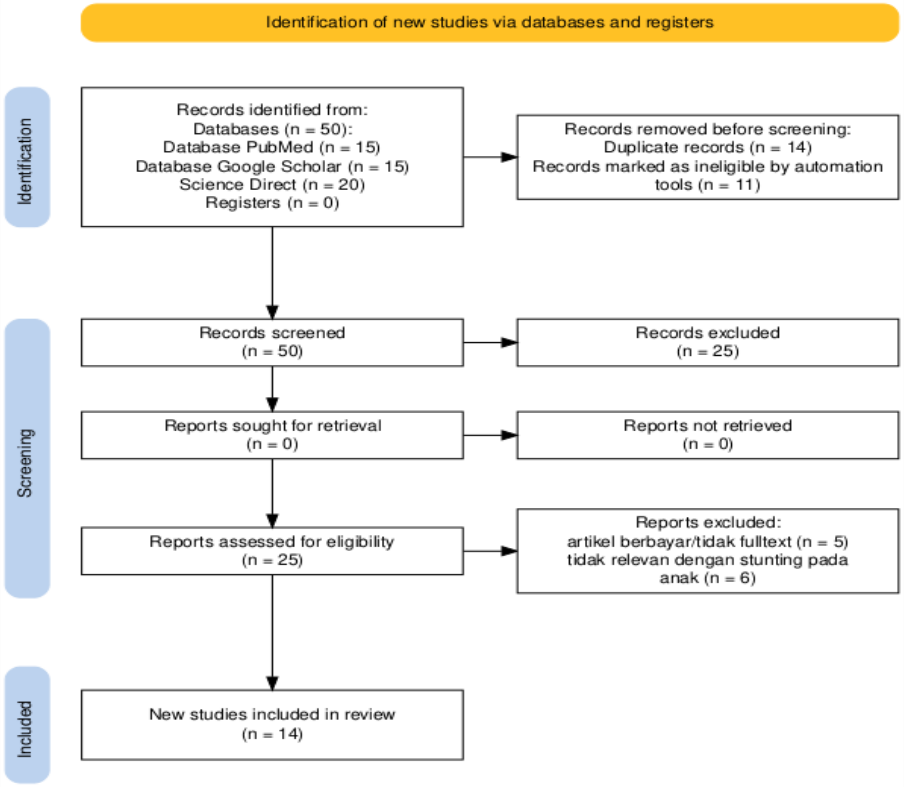

Figure 1. Prism Flow Diagram

RESULTS

A literature search was conducted in the databases PubMed, Science Direct, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar using the keywords "stunting in children aged 0-5 years," "stunting prevention," and "stunting control strategy." A total of 50 national and international journal articles relevant to these keywords were initially identified. These articles were then screened based on completeness, relevance, and duplication, resulting in 25 remaining articles. Subsequently, a further selection was performed according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for this literature review consisted of studies related

to the prevention and control strategies of stunting, while the exclusion criteria eliminated articles not related to these topics. After applying these criteria, 11 articles were excluded, leaving 14 articles that met the study criteria and were included for review, yielding relevant articles (Haskas et al., 2021).

Table 1. Literature Review

No	Author's	Title	Method	Research Findings
1	(Evi Soviyati, Endang S. Sulaeman, Ir. Sugihardjo, 2023)	*Effect of applying the health promotion model in stunting prevention and behavior control in* Indonesia	This study employed an analytical quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. A survey method was used to collect primary data through questionnaires administered directly to individual respondents.	Several exogenous variables that have a significant influence on stunting prevention and control behaviors include sanitation, self-efficacy, and social support. The effects of socioeconomic status and sanitation through self-efficacy have a positive indirect impact on stunting prevention and control behaviors. Self-efficacy serves as an important mediator in the relationship between sanitation and socioeconomic status with stunting prevention behaviors. This study underscores the importance of a multidimensional approach involving sanitation, self-efficacy, social support, and nutrition-based caregiving practices in efforts to prevent stunting in Indonesia.
2	(Mulyani *et al.*, 2023)	*Factors Affecting Village Apparatus, Integrated Service Post and Early Childhood Education in Stunting Prevention*	This study employed a cross-sectional design to identify the achievements of stunting prevention efforts through the SINAR APD program (Synergy of Village Officials, Integrated Health Posts, and Early Childhood Education Centers). The program focuses on four main aspects: planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring.	The research findings indicate that synergy among institutions (village officials, Posyandu, and early childhood education centers) is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of stunting prevention programs. A community-based approach involving these three institutions can improve the quality of program planning and implementation. This study revealed that funding is the weakest aspect in efforts to prevent stunting through the SINAR APD program. Personnel factors, such as attitudes toward democratic parenting styles, positively contribute to funding, whereas permissive attitudes have a negative impact. Institutional synergy is the key to the program's success in improving planning, implementation, and monitoring of stunting prevention efforts in Indonesia.

3	(Setiyawati *et al.*, 2024)	Studi Literatur: Keadaan Dan Penanganan Stunting di Indonesia	This article employs a literature review method using secondary data obtained from the Google Scholar database. The journals reviewed were selected based on inclusion criteria tailored to the requirements of the article.	Stunting Management in Indonesia: a. The government acts as a guide, regulator, and implementer in efforts to accelerate the reduction of stunting prevalence. b. Stunting management is not solely the responsibility of the health sector but requires multisectoral actions. c. Several strategies implemented in Indonesia to address stunting include Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), the Provision of Supplementary Recovery Food (PMT-P), Empowerment of Health Cadres, and Pregnant Women Classes.
4	(Panigoro, 2020)	Upaya Pencegahan Dan Penanggulangan Stunting Pada Balita Di Wilayah Kerja Puskesmas Tilongkabila	This study employed a descriptive quantitative method to illustrate the efforts in preventing and managing stunting among toddlers.	The study results indicate that stunting prevention efforts in the working area of Tilongkabila Health Center are categorized as "Moderate," while the mitigation efforts are classified as "Good." The majority of toddlers sampled in the study were classified as stunted with a "Short" category. This research highlights the importance of early initiation of breastfeeding (IMD), exclusive breastfeeding, appropriate complementary feeding (MP-ASI), and complete immunization as part of stunting prevention efforts. Furthermore, the provision of supplementary feeding (PMT), milk, and fortified rice constitutes components of stunting mitigation strategies in the area.
5	(Irdawati *et al.*, 2024)	*Efforts of Increase Cadre Capacity about Stunting Prevention*	The study used a quasi-experimental design involving pre-test and post-test assessments with a control group.	Training provided to health cadres has been shown to improve their knowledge about stunting. The use of media tools, such as pocketbooks and growth monitoring charts (KMS), during training resulted in better outcomes compared to lecture-based methods alone. The improvement in cadre knowledge is expected to contribute to stunting prevention efforts in the area.
6	(Mediani *et al.*, 2022)	*Factors Affecting the Knowledge and Motivation of Health Cadres in Stunting Prevention Among Children in Indonesia*	This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational and cross-sectional design. This design was utilized to examine the relationship between	This study demonstrated that health cadres in West Java possess a good level of knowledge regarding stunting prevention. However, their motivation remains an area that requires further improvement. Education and marital status were found to be significant factors influencing the cadres' knowledge, while education, marital status, and age were identified as factors affecting their motivation. These

			independent and dependent variables at a single point in time. A questionnaire specifically developed for this study was used to collect data on respondents' demographics, knowledge, and motivation related to stunting prevention. The instrument had been tested for both validity and reliability.	findings imply that continuous training and mentoring programs are essential to enhance both the knowledge and motivation of health cadres. In addition, recognition and appreciation of their roles may further contribute to increasing their motivation in stunting prevention efforts.
7	(Soofi *et al.*, 2024)	*Specialized Nutritious Foods and Behavior Change Communication Interventions During the First 1000 D Of Life to Prevent Stunting: A Quasi-Experimental Study In Afghanistan*	This study employed a community-based quasi-experimental pre-post design with a control group. This design was chosen due to the challenges associated with implementing randomization at the community level.	The provision of specialized nutritious foods (SNF) combined with social and behavior change communication (SBCC) during the first 1,000 days of life is associated with reductions in stunting and underweight, as well as improvements in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices among children under two years of age. These findings support investments in proven nutrition interventions to prevent and address stunting. The combination of SNF and SBCC can directly tackle nutritional problems while promoting behaviors that support child health and nutrition. This study provides important evidence on the effectiveness of nutrition interventions in Afghanistan, where stunting remains a significant public health concern.
8	(Saleh *et al.*, 2021)	*Role of Maternal in Preventing Stunting: a Systematic Review*	This study employed a systematic review method with narrative synthesis to understand the role of mothers in preventing stunting among toddlers. Relevant articles were retrieved from electronic databases such as PubMed, ProQuest, Science Direct, and Google Scholar, covering the period from 2010 to 2020. The	This study found that the role of the mother is crucial during three key phases: preconception, prenatal, and infant-toddlerhood. In the preconception phase, the mother must maintain an optimal nutritional status. During the prenatal phase, the mother needs to ensure adequate nutrition for fetal development. In the infant-toddlerhood phase, the mother should initiate early breastfeeding, provide exclusive breastfeeding, and offer appropriate complementary feeding. Factors such as maternal nutritional knowledge, caregiving practices, and family support also play significant roles in preventing stunting.

			article selection process was conducted in six stages, including identification, screening, and quality appraisal of studies using assessment tools such as CASP and Quality Assessment.	
9	(Bhutta *et al.*, 2020)	*How Countries Can Reduce Child Stunting at Scale: Lessons From Exemplar Countries*	This study employed a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Data were collected from multiple sources, including household surveys, national-level administrative data, in-depth interviews, and a comprehensive literature review.	Several key findings from this study include the critical importance of a multisectoral approach. Factors such as maternal education, maternal nutrition, maternal and neonatal care, as well as fertility reduction, play a pivotal role. A comprehensive roadmap is required to systematically reduce childhood stunting, encompassing diagnostic measures, stakeholder consultations, and the implementation of both direct and indirect nutritional interventions.
10	(Soofi *et al.*, 2022)	*Effectiveness Of Nutritional Supplementation During the First 1000-Days of Life to Reduce Child Undernutrition: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial In Pakistan*	This study employed a cluster randomized controlled trial (CRCT) design conducted in two rural districts of Sindh, Pakistan.	This study demonstrates that the provision of WSB+ to pregnant and lactating mothers, as well as LNS-MQ to children aged 6 to 23 months, is effective in promoting linear growth and reducing stunting at 24 months of age. These results underscore the importance of nutritional interventions during the first 1,000 days of life to prevent malnutrition and support optimal growth. The findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that food-based nutritional supplements can improve growth outcomes and reduce the prevalence of stunting in low- and middle-income countries.
11	(Astuti, Suindyah Dwiningwarni and Atmojo, 2025)	*Modeling Environmental Interactions and Collaborative Interventions For Childhood Stunting: A Case from Indonesia*	This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. Data were collected over the period from January 2023 to September 2024 in Indonesia. The study involved 60 informants who	This study demonstrates that cross-sectoral collaboration and active participation of all stakeholders are essential in addressing stunting. Social capital, encompassing elements such as social networks, collective norms, and trust, plays a crucial role in strengthening stunting reduction efforts. The study emphasizes the importance of leveraging social capital in stunting intervention programs.

			were recruited using purposive sampling.	
12	(Rukiko, Mwakalobo and Mmasa, 2023)	*The Impact of Conditional Cash Transfer Program on Stunting in Under Five Year's Poor Children*	Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan pendekatan *Regression Discontinuity Design* (RDD). Data yang digunakan adalah data sekunder rumah tangga yang dikumpulkan oleh TASAF PSSN (Program Jaringan Pengaman Sosial Produktif) di Tanzania, serta data anak-anak yang terkait dari kartu klinik masing-masing	This study employed a quasi-experimental design utilizing the Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) approach. The data used consisted of secondary household data collected by TASAF PSSN (Productive Social Safety Net Program) in Tanzania, along with related child data obtained from individual clinic cards.
13	(Yeboah *et al.*, 2024)	*Quality Of Nutritional Status Assessment and Its Relationship eith the Effect of Rainfall on Childhood Stunting: A Cross-Sectional Study in Rural Burkina Faso*	This study employed a cross-sectional design, integrating anthropometric data, rainfall measurements, and clinical observations.	This study demonstrates that improving the quality of nutritional status assessment can complement existing efforts to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on children's nutritional status. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening health systems, particularly the quality of nutritional services at primary healthcare facilities, to minimize the impact of climate change on stunting.
14	(Gani *et al.*, 2021)	*The Effect Of Convergent Action On Reducing Stunting Prevalence In Under-Five Children In Banggai District, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia*	This study is an evaluation of a national program implemented in Banggai Regency starting in 2018. Ten villages (n = 532) were involved in the program based on the severity level of stunting prevalence. The data were analyzed using the Chi-square test and independent t-test with SPSS software.	This study demonstrates that the implementation of the convergence program in Banggai Regency has had a positive impact on reducing stunting, particularly among the 0–11 months age group. This reduction aligns with the Indonesian government's efforts to address stunting through a multisectoral approach involving both health and non-health sectors. The study also highlights the importance of local government commitment, cross-sectoral collaboration, and program innovation in tackling stunting. The establishment of the 1,000 Days of Life Task Force and innovations such as the Preconception Integrated Service Post reflect the seriousness of the Banggai Regency government in addressing the stunting problem.

Source: Literature Journal Analysis

DISCUSSION

The review conducted on three national journal articles and eleven international journal articles indicates that stunting prevention and control strategies must adopt a holistic approach involving health promotion, nutritional improvement, sanitation enhancement, community empowerment, and increased parental self-efficacy. The implementation of theory-based health promotion models such as the Health Belief Model (HBM), social support or Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and community organizing has been proven effective in reducing the incidence of stunting in Indonesia (Evi Soviyati, Endang S. Sulaeman, Ir. Sugihardjo, 2023). A multidimensional approach that involves individuals, families, and communities can serve as a key strategy to comprehensively address this issue (Astuti, Suindyah Dwiningwarni, and Atmojo, 2025; Bhutta et al., 2020).

Enhancement of self-efficacy and social support is achieved through training and educational programs aimed at improving parents' knowledge and skills in child care, exclusive breastfeeding (Saleh et al., 2021), appropriate and nutritious complementary feeding, as well as iron and micronutrient supplementation for pregnant women and children (Panigoro, 2020; Irdawati et al., 2024). Health cadres act as liaisons between healthcare workers and the community, conducting outreach on the importance of adequate nutrition, such as exclusive breastfeeding and nutritious complementary feeding (MPASI). These cadres also provide education on sanitation hygiene and maternal and child health maintenance (Mediani et al., 2022).

Nutritional improvement can also be supported by socioeconomic advancement through the provision of supplementary recovery foods (Soofi et al., 2022; Saleh et al., 2021), financial aid programs for low-income families (Rukiko, Mwakalobo, and Mmasa, 2023), and the creation of sustainable employment opportunities (Mulyani et al., 2023; Setiyawati et al., 2024). Community empowerment is facilitated through multisectoral collaboration involving community leaders, religious figures, and community organizations in stunting prevention efforts and programs tailored to local needs and contexts (Astuti, Suindyah Dwiningwarni, and Atmojo, 2025; Gani et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the review of various studies related to the prevention and control of stunting in Indonesia, it can be concluded that the majority of the articles indicate that efforts to prevent and control stunting require a holistic approach involving community education, optimization of the role of posyandu cadres, specific nutritional interventions, sanitation improvements, and community empowerment through multisectoral collaboration. With consistent implementation of these research findings, it is expected that the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia will continue to decline, thereby enhancing the quality of future human resources to realize a competitive "Golden Generation" of Indonesia. The author hopes that these research results can serve as a reference and source of information for future researchers to further improve and expand knowledge beneficial to the health sector, particularly public health.

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