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The Effectiveness of Exclusive Breastfeeding in Preventing Stunting Among Children Under Five: A Systematic Literature Review

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months reduces the risk of stunting in toddlers
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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAK

Stunting remains a major global public health issue, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. One of the main contributing factors to the incidence of stunting is the lack of exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life, which plays a crucial role in supporting optimal growth and development in toddlers. This literature review aimed to analyze the effectiveness of exclusive breastfeeding in reducing stunting incidence among children under five years of age. The review was conducted using electronic databases, including Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Pro-Quest. Articles were selected based on inclusion criteria, such as relevance to exclusive breastfeeding and stunting, full-text availability, and publication within the last five years (2017–2021). Of the 33 articles initially identified, 19 articles met the eligibility criteria and were included in the analysis. The results showed that exclusive breastfeeding significantly reduces the risk of stunting in toddlers. Several studies reported that toddlers who were not exclusively breastfed had a 3 to 61 times higher risk of experiencing stunting compared to those who received exclusive breastfeeding. In addition to breastfeeding practices, factors such as maternal education, family support, and health education influenced breastfeeding behavior and stunting outcomes. In conclusion, exclusive breastfeeding is an effective preventive strategy against stunting in toddlers. Strengthening breastfeeding education and support programs is essential to reduce stunting prevalence and improve child health status.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a global nutritional problem, especially in developing countries, especially in Indonesia that needs attention and improvement (Erika & Luluk, 2020). Stunting also

occurs chronically in conditions of malnutrition starting from the first 1000 days of a child's life according to age below normal limits (Leila et al, 2019). The impact of stunting is not only impaired physical growth, but also affects the pattern of brain growth, and toddlers who experience stunting as adults will have the opportunity to contract chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, stroke and hypertension and may have a decrease in work productivity of their productive age (Erika & Luluk, 2020).

The prevalence of stunting in Indonesia tends to be static. In 2010, there was a slight decrease from the previous year, namely 35.6 %. However, the prevalence of short toddlers increased again in 2013 to 37.2 %. The results of the 2018 Central Statistics Agency show the prevalence of short toddlers in Indonesia is 19.3% and very short toddlers 11.5% (BAPPENAS & UNICEF, 2017). Monitoring of nutritional status carried out by the Ministry of Health in 2015 obtained a picture of 29% of households with toddlers belonging to the short category.

In addition, the 2021 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) recorded a national stunting prevalence of 24.4%, indicating a moderate public health problem category (Ministry of Health Indonesia, 2022). Although this number shows improvement compared to previous years, the target of reducing stunting to below 14% by 2024 has not yet been achieved (BAPPENAS & UNICEF, 2021).

Stunting describes growth failure that has accumulated since before and after birth due to insufficient nutritional needs (Esfarjani, 2013). Stunting is a health problem that is influenced by food availability in the community, economic development, poverty, and inappropriate feeding patterns. In addition, it is also influenced by the high prevalence of infectious diseases (Fitri, 2012). Improper feeding will interfere with the nutritional status and health of infants under five, including the pattern of breastfeeding.

The problem of stunting can be a fatal problem for children if it is not handled properly. According to Fikawati (2017), the impact that can be caused by the stunting problem is metabolic disorders in the body. From the results of research conducted by Sari (2016), the average energy of stunted children is lower than that of non-stunted children. Decreased immunity so children get sick easily. Factors including before birth such as maternal nutrition during pregnancy and infection factors, socioeconomic, health services, and various other factors that collaborate at certain levels and levels so that ultimately lead to linear growth failure (Fikrina, 2017).

One of the factors causing stunting is a history of exclusive breastfeeding. Ideally, breast milk is the only perfect food for babies to fulfill their physical and psychological needs as they grow and develop (Adriani, 2014). With exclusive breastfeeding without the addition of other fluids, including breastfeeding the baby purely for a minimum period of time until the baby is 6 months old (Maryunani, 2015).

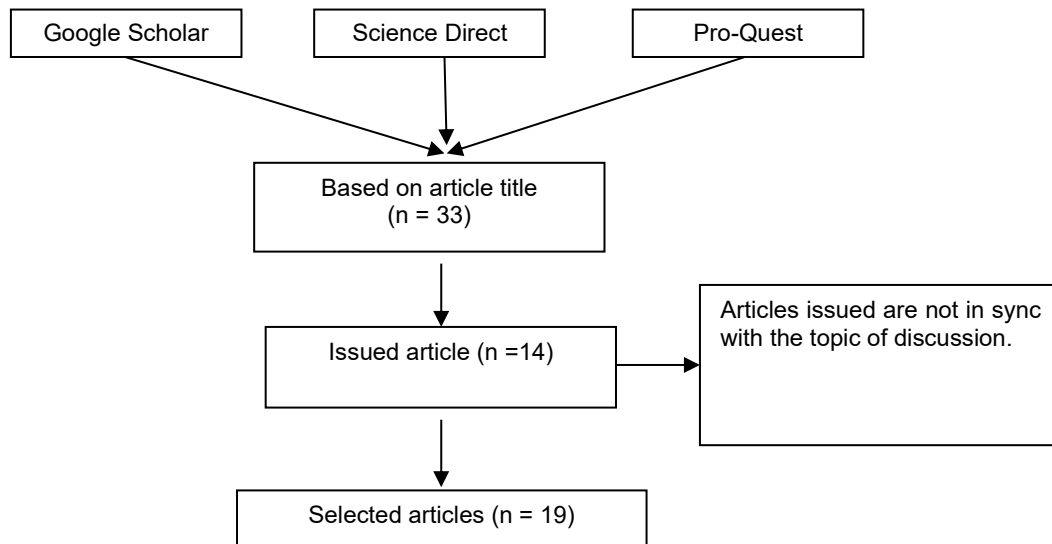
The only food that suits the condition of the baby's digestive tract and meets the needs for the first months is breast milk. Babies who are not exclusively breastfed have a greater risk of stunting than babies who are exclusively breastfed, toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed have a 3.7 times greater risk of stunting than babies who are exclusively breastfed (Dewi, 2015).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a literature review conducted through electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and ProQuest. The search was carried out on August 28, 2021, using the keywords "stunting" and "exclusive breastfeeding". The inclusion criteria included full-text articles published within the last five years (2017–2021), with titles and content relevant to the research objectives and linked to nursing science. Articles were selected based on their relevance, accessibility, and quality, while duplicates or irrelevant ones were excluded. The selection process involved screening titles, abstracts, and full texts. The final articles were grouped by

research findings and analyzed thematically to support the study discussion. A total of 19 full-text articles met the inclusion criteria, as listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PRISMA



3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Initial literature search found 33 articles (Google Scholar 14, Portal Garuda 8, Science Direct 6, Pro-Quest 5). The 14 articles issued were out of sync with the topic of discussion, namely about the effectiveness of exclusive breastfeeding with the incidence of stunting in toddlers.

The results of 19 articles found that the effectiveness of exclusive breastfeeding with stunting in toddlers was as listed in table 1.

Table 1. Results From 19 Articles Regarding the Effectiveness of Exclusive Breastfeeding with Stunting Incidence in Toddlers

No	Writer	Year	Title	Method	Results
1	Erika Fitria Lestari, Luluk Khusnul Dwihestie	2020	Exclusive Breast Milk Related to Stunting Events in Toddlers	Correlation quantitative research with case-control method	Based on the results of the study indicate that there is a relationship between Exclusive breastfeeding with stunting is proven by the results of the chi square test, with p-value < α which is 0.000 and the correlation coefficient value is 0.429.
2	Wahida Yuliana, Bawon Nulhakim	2019	Effectiveness Of Grand's Class on The Success of Exclusive Breast Milk to Prevent Stunting	Type of experiment by comparing the control group and the treatment group	The results showed that the group that received treatment in the grandmother's class, gave exclusive breastfeeding as many as 20 (66%) and the group that did not receive treatment with a total of 6 (20%). Value $0.00 < \alpha 0.05$ indicates that the grandmother's class has an effect on exclusive breastfeeding so that the grandmother's class can also be a solution in increasing the achievement of

					exclusive breastfeeding through family support.
3	Leila siti chairani, Merry maeta sari, Andreanda nasution, Tika noor prastia	2019	Description Of Exclusive Breastfeeding on Stunting Events in Tolls Aged 24-60 Month in Tanah Baru Kelurahan, Bogor in 2018	Descriptive study with <i>purposive sampling data collection technique</i> .	The results showed that most of the mothers were around the age of 29 years, the mother's last education was at most elementary school graduates by 34.8%, the mother's occupation was mostly as housewives as much as 92.4%. A total of 52.2 % of children under five are female and most of them are around the age of 39 months. The coverage of exclusive breastfeeding is 31.5% and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> is 33.7%, which means that the incidence of <i>stunting</i> in Tanah Baru Village has become a public health problem.
4	Marlan Pangkong, A. J. M. Rattu, Nancy S.H. Malonda	2017	The Relationship Between Exclusive Breast Milk with The Event of Stunting In Children Aged 13-36 Months in The Work Area of The Sonder Health Center	This research is an analytical observational study with a cross-sectional design conducted in the working area of Sonder Health Center, Minahasa.	The results of research conducted in the working area of the Sonder Health Center showed that infants who were exclusively breastfed had stunting nutritional status of 20.7% and infants who were not exclusively breastfed had stunting status of 26.8% with p value > 0.05, namely p value 0.376, which means that there is no significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting at the age of 13-36 months in the working area of the Sonder Health Center.
5	Cynthia, I Wayan Bikin Suryawan, A.A Made Widiassa	2019	The Relationship between Exclusive Breastfeeding History and <i>Stunting Incidence</i> in Children 12-59 Months Age at Wangaya Hospital, Denpasar City	This research is an analytical observational study with a cross-sectional method using secondary data from medical records.	The results showed that 25 children (39.1 %) were <i>stunted</i> . History of exclusive breastfeeding was found in 27 children (42.2 %). The results of the analysis showed a p value of 0.604 with a prevalence ratio of 1.265. Statistically there is no significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and <i>stunting</i> in children aged 12-59 months at Wangaya Hospital, Denpasar City.
6	Lidia Fitri	2018	The Relationship of Lbw and Exclusive Breast Milk with <i>Stunting Events</i> in Fifty Pekanbaru Puskesmas	This type of quantitative analytic research with <i>cross sectional design</i> .	The results showed that 25 people (33.3%) under five experienced <i>stunting</i> , 22 people with LBW (29.3%) and 55 people who were not given exclusive breastfeeding (73.3%). There is a significant relationship between low birth weight (LBW) and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> where the p value is 0.000 and there is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> , a p value of 0.021 means p <0.05. It can be concluded that there is a

					relationship between LBW and exclusive breastfeeding with the incidence of <i>stunting</i> , so H_0 is accepted.
7	Nadia Maulidah, Anggray Duvita Wahyani	2020	Relationship between Infant Birth Weight (BBL) and Exclusive Breastfeeding Behavior on Stunting in Toddlers	This type of quantitative analytic research with cross sectional design.	The results showed that 13 toddlers were stunted, no toddlers were born with low birth weight (LBW), and only 2 toddlers received exclusive breastfeeding. There is no significant relationship between low birth weight (LBW) and the incidence of stunting where p -value > 0.05 is 0.995 and there is also no relationship between exclusive breastfeeding behavior and the incidence of stunting with p value > 0.05 , which is 0.25. it can be concluded that there is no relationship between LBW and exclusive breastfeeding with the incidence of stunting.
8	Suriana, Haniarti, Ayu Dwi Putri Rusman	2021	The Relationship of Birth Weight and Exclusive Breastfeeding to The Event of Stunting in Toddlers, Cappakala Village, Mattiro Sompe District, Pinrang Regency	This study is an analytic observation with a research design using a <i>cross-sectional design</i> .	The results of the bivariate analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between birth weight and exclusive breastfeeding on the incidence of <i>stunting</i> . It is recommended for mothers to continue to provide exclusive breastfeeding by looking at the high incidence of <i>stunting</i> and it is hoped that mothers will be more active in participating in counseling and other health activities in order to improve communication, information and education (KIE) regarding balanced nutrition. Then to health workers to improve health promotion efforts by providing counseling to the community on how to prevent <i>stunting</i> in children and providing information about the importance of bringing toddlers to the Posyandu and implementing cross-sectoral collaboration in improving maternal and child health to prevent stunting infants/toddlers.
9	Herliana Monika Azi Djogo, Yasinta Betan, Yohanes Dion	2021	Relationship Of Mother's Occupation and Exclusive Breastfeeding Practice with Stunting Events in Children in South Central Timor District	The design of this study was <i>cross-sectional analytic</i> .	Results: the study found that 26.6% were <i>stunted</i> and 73.4% of toddlers were not <i>stunted</i> , while 81.5% of mothers did not have jobs and 68.2% of mothers did not give exclusive breastfeeding. Conclusion: The results of the <i>Chi-Square</i> test found that there was no significant relationship between maternal occupation and <i>stunting</i> with a p -value of 0.159 and there was a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding

					and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> with a <i>p-value</i> of 0.000.
10	Lidia Fitri, Erita	2019	Relationship Between Exclusive Breast Milk and Early Mp Asi with Stunting Events in Toddlers	This type of quantitative analytic research with case control design uses a retrospective approach.	The results showed that the majority of respondents were 13 people (86.7%) in the case group without exclusive breastfeeding, the majority of respondents, namely 12 people (80%) in the case group, gave early complementary feeding. The test results show that there is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and stunting with a <i>p-value</i> 0.000 and there is a relationship between complementary feeding and stunting with a <i>p-value</i> which is 0.001. H_0 accepted. Conclusion: there is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, early complementary feeding and the incidence of stunting.
11	Sr. Anita Sampe, SJMJ, Rindani Claurita Toban, Monica Anung Madi	2020	The Relationship of Exclusive Breastfeeding with Stunting Incidences in Toddlers	This research design uses a case approach control study	The results of the study used the chi-square test and continued using the odds ratio test. The results of the chi-square test $p = 0.000$ ($0.000 < 0.05$), this indicates that there is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers. Meanwhile, in the odds ratio test, the OR value = 61, which means that toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed are 61 times more likely to experience stunting than toddlers who are exclusively breastfed. Exclusive breastfeeding can reduce the risk of stunting.
12	Sri Indrawati, Warsiti	2016	The Relationship of Exclusive Breastfeeding with the Event of <i>Stunting</i> in Children Aged 2-3 Years of Gunung Kidul	This research is <i>correlational</i> using <i>cross sectional method</i> .	Results: Toddlers in Karangrejek village, Wonosari sub-district, Gunung Kidul district, most of the respondents gave exclusive breastfeeding, namely 86.9%. Toddlers 2-3 years old in Karangrejek village, Wonosari sub-district, Gunung Kidul district, most of the respondents were in the normal category, namely 73.1 %. There is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> in children aged 2-3 years <i>p-value</i> ($0.000 < 0.05$). Conclusions and Suggestions: There is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers 2-3 years. The results of this study provide input for mothers to provide exclusive breastfeeding

					for babies so that they can avoid <i>stunting</i> .
13	Arfianingsih Dwi Putri, Fanny Ayudia	2020	The Relationship of Exclusive Breast Milk with The Event of Stunting in Children Aged 6-59 Months in Padang City	This research is an analytic observational study with a case control study design or a case control study.	The results of this study indicate that there is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting, OR = 38.89, meaning that the incidence of stunting is 38.89 times the risk in children who are not exclusively breastfed than children who are exclusively breastfed. It is recommended for further research to examine other factors, such as mother's motivation.
14	Ika Pramulya S, Fiki Wijayanti, Mona Saparwati	2021	The Relationship of Exclusive Breastfeeding with The Event of Stunting in Toddlers Aged 24-60 Months	This research method is correlation descriptive	The results showed that 44 toddlers (47.8 %) were stunted, 38 toddlers were not given exclusive breastfeeding and 6 toddlers were given exclusive breastfeeding. Bivariate analysis showed that there was a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and <i>stunting</i> (<i>p value</i> 0.0001). The conclusion of this study is that there is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> in the working area of the Selopampang Health Center, Temanggung Regency
15	Sri Handayani, Wiwin Noviana Kapota, Eka Oktavianto	2019	Correlation Of Exclusive Breast Milk Status with <i>Stunting Events</i> in Tolls Aged 24-36 Months in Watugajah Village, Gunungkidul Regency	Method: This type of research is quantitative descriptive correlational research with a <i>cross-sectional approach</i> .	Results: Bivariate analysis using <i>chi square test</i> . The history of exclusive breastfeeding in this study reached 56.8% or 25 children, and the majority of children in this study tended not to experience <i>stunting</i> . Children who received exclusive breastfeeding tend not to experience <i>stunting</i> as many as 23 children (52.3 %). The results of the <i>chi square test</i> showed that the value of $p = 0.000$ ($p \text{ value} < 0.05$) and the value of $r = 0.609$. Conclusion: There is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of <i>stunting</i> in toddlers aged 24-36 months in Watugajah Village, Gunungkidul Regency.
16	Novita Eka Kusuma Wardani	2019	Exclusive Breastfeeding and Protein Information on Stunting in Babies Aged 12-36 Months	This study used a <i>cross-sectional design</i> .	The results of the study were infants who were not exclusively breastfed and experienced stunting by 57.1% and infants with less protein intake and experienced stunting by 75%. The results of the <i>chi square</i> statistical test showed that the <i>p value</i> was 0.02 ($p < 0.05$) which indicated that there was a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in infants

					12-36 months and a <i>p</i> value of 0.02 ($p < 0.05$) which indicates that there is a significant relationship between protein intake and the incidence of stunting in infants 12-36 months. The follow-up of this research needs to provide counseling about exclusive breastfeeding and nutrition to mothers and toddlers by health workers to improve the nutritional status of children.
17	Rina Hizriyani, Toto Santi Aji	2021	Exclusive Breast Milk as Stunting Prevention	The method used is a descriptive qualitative method from the study of literature from various international and national journals, this method is used to summarize the current state of understanding and knowledge about a topic or problem.	Exclusive breastfeeding is the easiest way to meet the nutritional needs of babies. The benefits of exclusive breastfeeding have been proven to help children get adequate nutritional intake so as to minimize the risk of stunting in children. This effort aims so that Indonesian children can grow and develop optimally and maximally, accompanied by emotional, social, and physical abilities that are ready to learn, and able to innovate and compete in any field.
18	Risva, Tanti Asrianti, Nurul Afiah, Dwi Muliwana	2019	The Effect of Breast Milk on Stunting Events in The Work Area of Juanda Puskesmas Samarinda	This research is an analytic observational with a case control approach.	The results showed that the proportion of children under five who experienced stunting was higher with a history of not getting exclusive breastfeeding (51.5 %) although statistically it did not show a significant relationship (OR: 1.859; 95% CI: 0.797-4.338). Further research is needed to investigate all factors suspected as risk factors for stunting.
19	Elfalini Warnelis, Debora Simamora	2021	The Effect of History of Infection and Exclusive Breast Milk on The Growth of Together in Preventing Stunting	This research uses Phenomenological design naturalistic approach Retrospective cross-sectional study.	After doing statistical tests through the chi square test, it was found that the <i>p</i> value (< 0.05) which means that there is an effect of a history of infection and exclusive breastfeeding on the growth and development of toddlers in preventing stunting.

4. DISCUSSION

Breast milk is a nutritional intake that will help the growth and development of children. One of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding is that it can support baby growth, especially height because breast milk calcium is more efficiently absorbed than formula milk (Zomratur et al, 2018). Babies who do not get exclusive breastfeeding will experience problems with physical health and brain intelligence. One of them is failure to grow, which is marked by the baby's weight dropping or not increasing, in order to

grow not too thin, the growth in height will stop or run very slowly and stunting occurs (Sjafiq, 2012). This is in accordance with the research of Lidia Fitri (2017) that there is a relationship between low birth weight and the incidence of stunting in toddlers and there is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of stunting in toddlers.

The results of Anita, Claurita & Anung research (2020) show that toddlers who are not given exclusive breastfeeding are 61 times more likely to experience stunting compared to toddlers who are exclusively breastfed. In toddlerhood is a process of growth and development that occurs very rapidly. Usually, children at this time have difficulty or do not want to eat, children's appetite often changes which today eats quite a lot and when the next day eats little (Diaz, Lusmilasari, & Madyaningrum, 2017). Exclusive breastfeeding, which is a nutritional intake that is in accordance with the needs, will help the growth and development of children. And babies who do not get enough breast milk have poor nutritional intake and can cause malnutrition (Indrawati, 2016).

Breast milk is the only ideal food that is best and most perfect for babies to meet the physical and psychological needs of babies who are growing and developing (Adrian, 2014). Early breastfeeding after birth can affect nutrition in toddlers. Babies who get their first breast milk containing colostrum increase their immunity (Walters CN et al, 2019). In line with the research of Ika, Fiki, & Mona (2021) that there were 15 toddlers (28.3%) who did not receive exclusive breastfeeding but did not experience stunting. So, according to the researcher's assumptions, these toddlers get quite good nutrition. Breastfeeding while giving formula milk can indeed meet the nutritional needs of babies so that their growth is not disturbed, but formula does not contain antibodies as well as breast milk so babies are more prone to disease (Pangkong, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

The literature review concludes that exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life plays a significant role in preventing stunting in toddlers. Consistent findings across selected studies show that toddlers who receive exclusive breastfeeding have a lower risk of growth failure compared to those who do not. This highlights the importance of promoting exclusive breastfeeding as a key strategy in early nutritional interventions to support optimal growth and development, and reduce the prevalence of stunting.

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