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Literature Study: Analysis of Stunting Control Program Planning in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that is still a major challenge in Indonesia, especially in rural areas. This condition is caused by various factors such as long-term malnutrition, recurrent infections, poor sanitation, and low levels of education and family economic conditions. This study aims to analyze the planning of stunting control programs in rural areas based on literature studies from various national and international articles in the last five years. The method used is a literature study with data collection through searching scientific journals, research reports, and publications of global health organizations. Data analysis was carried out descriptively by reviewing and synthesizing various findings of previous research. The results of the study show that the main factors of stunting include maternal and child nutrition, environmental sanitation, and parenting. Specific and sensitive nutritional interventions have been proven to be effective in reducing the prevalence of stunting when carried out in an integrated manner. However, the implementation of the program still faces obstacles such as limited resources, weak cross-sector coordination, and gaps in access to health services in rural areas. In conclusion, planning an integrated, community-based, and focused stunting control program that focuses on the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) is very important to reduce stunting rates in a sustainable manner.

INTRODUCTION

Stunting or malnutrition is a global problem that occurs in various countries, both poor, developing, and developed (Azizah et al., 2022). Nutrition has an important role in supporting the growth, development, and improvement of the quality of human resources, so the provision of the right nutrition is necessary so that individuals can reach their optimal potential (Usada et al., 2021; Probohasturi et al., 2019).

The nutritional status of children, especially toddlers, is also one of the important indicators in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Stunting is a common nutritional problem in toddlers, characterized by failure to grow due to chronic malnutrition. This condition is often influenced by poor parenting, especially in the first 1,000 days of life until the age of 2 years. Children are categorized as stunting if the TB/U score is below -2 elementary school based on WHO standards.

Stunting in Indonesia is still a serious chronic nutrition problem. In 2022, around 1 in 5 children (21.6%) experienced growth failure due to malnutrition, recurrent infections, and poor sanitation, especially in the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) period. The main factors causing stunting include low nutritional intake in pregnant women, lack of exclusive breastfeeding and quality complementary foods, and are influenced by economic conditions and education levels.

In recent years, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia has shown a downward trend, which is to 19.8% by the end of 2024, with a target of further decline in 2025. However, there are still various challenges, such as achieving lower national targets, gaps between regions, and increasing cases of underweight in children under five.

SSGI data for 2025 also shows that although the national stunting rate has decreased to 19.8%, rural areas still have a higher risk. This is due to limited access to health services, poor sanitation conditions, and low nutritional intake. Therefore, more intensive and focused interventions are needed at the village level to overcome nutrition problems and achieve the target of reducing stunting by 14.2% by 2029.

Efforts to combat stunting have been carried out through various programs, both specific and sensitive, such as improving maternal and child nutrition, promoting exclusive breastfeeding, improving sanitation, and health education. However, the success of the program is highly dependent on precise, integrated, and needs-based planning for the local community. Less than optimal planning can cause programs to run ineffectively and not on target, especially in rural areas with diverse characteristics.

Therefore, an in-depth study through a literature study is needed to analyze how stunting control program planning in rural areas has been carried out. This analysis is expected to identify supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as provide recommendations in the preparation of more effective and sustainable program planning, in order to reduce stunting rates and improve the quality of public health in rural areas.

METHODS

This study uses a literature study method with data collection techniques through searching scientific articles from various sources, such as national and international journals that are relevant to the research topic. The selected article is a recent publication and is related to the planning of stunting control programs, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, data analysis is carried out descriptively by reviewing, comparing, and synthesizing findings from various literature to obtain comprehensive conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Planning stunting control programs in rural areas has a very important role in determining the success of efforts to reduce stunting rates. Good planning can ensure that any intervention is on target, in accordance with the needs of the community, and takes into account the specific conditions of rural areas such as limited access to health services, sanitation, and food availability.

This is supported by various previous research results that show that proper and integrated program planning plays an important role in reducing stunting rates, especially in rural areas. Various studies also confirm that factors such as cross-sector coordination, access to health services, and community empowerment are key to the success of stunting control programs. The summary of the results of the study can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Previous Research

Author and Year	Method	Findings
Sari et al., 2023	Cross-sectional	The main factors of stunting in rural areas are low maternal education, poor sanitation, and low family income.
Putri et al., 2022	Systematic review	Specific and sensitive nutrition intervention programs are effective in reducing the prevalence of stunting if carried out in an integrated manner.
Hidayat et al., 2024	Literature review	Stunting program planning still faces cross-sector coordination constraints and limited resources.
Lestari et al., 2021	Cross-sectional	Exclusive breastfeeding and children's diet have a significant effect on the incidence of stunting.
Rahmawati et al., 2025	Descriptive studies	Community-based interventions in villages increase nutrition awareness and reduce the risk of stunting.
Danaei et al., 2022	Global analysis	Stunting is influenced by nutritional, infectious, and environmental factors; Multisectoral intervention is urgently needed.
Headey et al., 2023	Cross-country study	Improved sanitation and economic improvement contribute significantly to the reduction of stunting.
UNICEF, 2023	Report analysis	Global stunting is declining, but it is still high in developing countries due to inequality in access to nutrition and health services.
WHO, 2022	Guideline review	Stunting prevention is focused on 1000 HPK through maternal and child nutrition interventions.

Bhutta et al., 2021	Systematic review	Maternal-child nutrition and health interventions have proven to be effective in reducing stunting globally.

Based on the findings of several articles, the results are then compiled in the form of diagrams to facilitate visualization and understanding of the main factors that affect stunting, as well as the relationship between causes, impacts, challenges, and efforts to overcome them. This diagram aims to provide a more systematic and concise overview of the results of the literature synthesis, so that it can help in identifying important aspects in the planning of stunting control programs in rural areas.

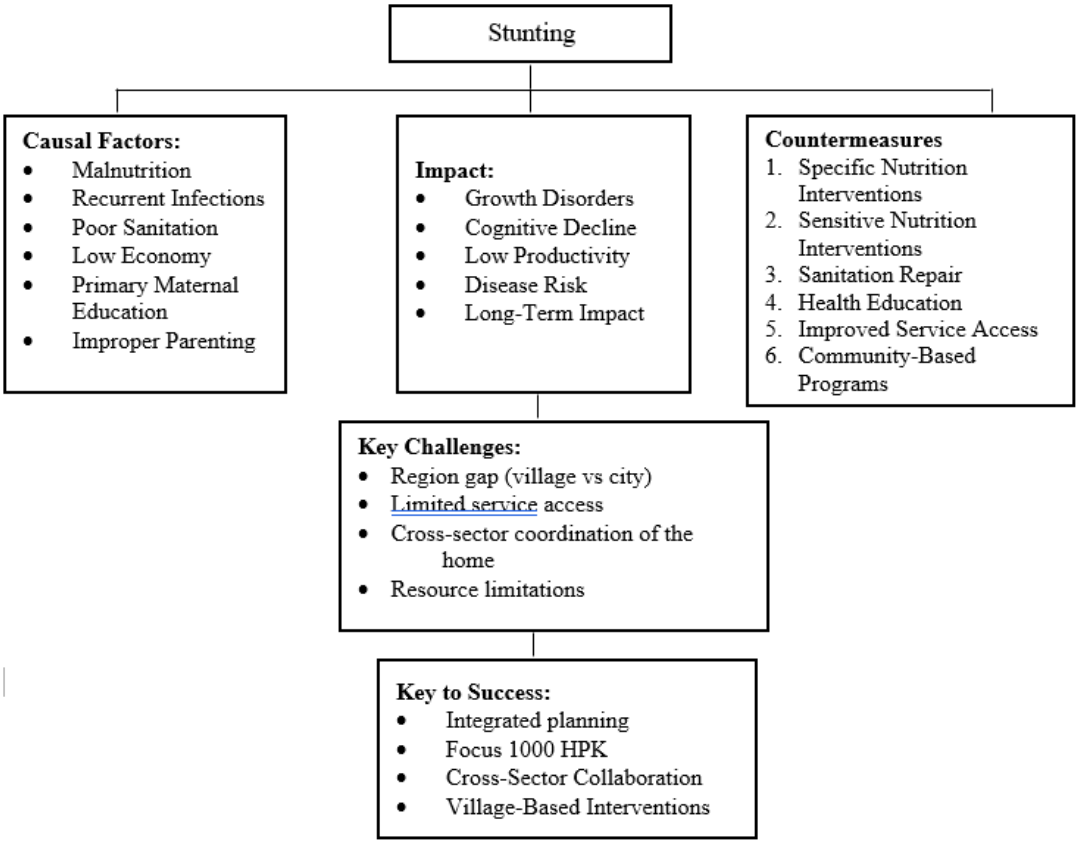

Diagram 1. Literature Findings

Based on the results of various previous studies, it can be found that stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that is influenced by various interrelated factors. The results of Sari et al.'s (2023) research show that the main factors causing stunting in rural areas include low maternal education levels, poor sanitation, and low family income. This is in line with the findings of Lestari et al. (2021) who affirm that exclusive breastfeeding practices and children's diets have a significant influence on stunting incidence. Furthermore, research by Putri et al. (2022) and Bhutta et al. (2021) shows that nutritional interventions, both specific and sensitive, have proven to be effective in reducing the prevalence of stunting if carried out in an integrated and sustainable manner. This is reinforced by WHO (2022) which emphasizes the importance of focusing interventions on the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) as a critical period in stunting prevention.

In terms of program planning, Hidayat et al. (2024) found that the implementation of stunting control programs still faces obstacles, especially in cross-sector coordination and limited resources. This condition shows that the success of the program depends not only on technical interventions, but also on the managerial and governance aspects of the program.

In addition, the study by Rahmawati et al. (2025) shows that community-based interventions at the village level can increase nutrition awareness and significantly reduce the risk of stunting. This is reinforced by Headey et al. (2023) who stated that improved sanitation and improved economic conditions have a major contribution to reducing the prevalence of stunting.

Globally, UNICEF (2023) reports that despite the decline in stunting rates, inequality of access to health and nutrition services is still a major challenge in developing countries. Danaei et al. (2022) also

emphasized that stunting is a multifactorial problem influenced by nutrition, infection, and the environment, so it requires a multisectoral approach.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that stunting control in rural areas requires a comprehensive, integrated, and community-based approach. Good program planning is a key factor in optimizing interventions, overcoming implementation barriers, and ensuring program sustainability in reducing stunting rates.

In addition to these factors, it is important to understand that the success of stunting prevention is also greatly influenced by the synergy between stakeholders. The programs carried out cannot stand alone, but require collaboration between the health sector, education, local governments, and the active role of the community. The discontinuity of coordination between sectors as found by Hidayat et al. (2024) shows that immature program planning can hinder the effectiveness of implementation in the field.

On the other hand, the community-based approach found in the research of Rahmawati et al. (2025) is one of the effective strategies in increasing the success of the program. The involvement of health cadres, community leaders, and families in nutrition education and child growth and development monitoring can increase public awareness of the importance of stunting prevention from an early age. This shows that community empowerment is an important component in program planning at the village level.

Furthermore, global findings from WHO (2022) and UNICEF (2023) emphasize that intervention in the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) period is the most crucial strategy in stunting prevention. During this period, children are particularly susceptible to malnutrition which can have a long-term impact on physical growth and cognitive development. Therefore, program planning must prioritize the target group of pregnant women, babies, and toddlers with appropriate and sustained interventions.

In addition, the improvement of environmental factors such as sanitation and access to clean water also has an important role as conveyed by Headey et al. (2023). Unhealthy environmental conditions can increase the risk of infections that worsen the nutritional status of children. Therefore, sensitive intervention approaches that include improving sanitation and improving the economic welfare of the community need to be integrated into stunting mitigation programs.

Overall, various literature findings suggest that stunting control program planning in rural areas must be holistic, integrated, and sustainable. It not only focuses on nutritional interventions, but also includes educational, economic, environmental, and socio-cultural aspects of the community. Thus, careful planning will be the main basis for achieving the target of reducing stunting nationally and improving the quality of human resources in the future.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature study, it can be concluded that stunting in rural areas is influenced by various multidimensional factors, such as nutrition, maternal education, sanitation, economic conditions, and child parenting. Stunting prevention requires integrated interventions between specific and sensitive nutrition programs, especially in the First 1000 Days of Life (HPK) period. In addition, the success of the program is largely determined by the quality of planning, cross-sector coordination, and community involvement. Therefore, planning a holistic, directed, and local needs-based stunting control program is the main key to reducing the prevalence of stunting in rural areas in a sustainable manner.

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