



Systematic Literature Review on Community Empowerment in Preventing Stunting in Children: Challenges and Impacts

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to identify strategies, barriers, and the impact of community empowerment on stunting prevention and provide recommendations for strengthening community-based programs. The method employed was a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of scientific publications from 2018 to 2025, obtained through Google Scholar, with strict selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The analysis results indicate that community empowerment is carried out through three stages: building awareness, increasing capacity, and facilitating independence. Activities include nutrition education, childcare training, yard utilisation, and the formation of local food business groups. The main obstacles faced were low community participation, limited facilities, and socio-cultural constraints. Positive impacts include increased nutritional knowledge, improved healthy lifestyles, and family economic independence. This study emphasises the importance of educational management in the success of the empowerment program. Relevant curriculum management, ongoing training, and data-driven evaluation are key to increasing community capacity and ensuring program sustainability. Cross-sector collaboration and a locally focused, potential-based approach are necessary for achieving long-term benefits.

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INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a crucial issue in Indonesia's human resource development, affecting not only health but also social and economic well-being (Puteri, 2024; Muharram et al., 2025). In the 2019-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), improving the quality of Indonesia's human resources is a top priority, involving various sectors, with stunting as one of the challenges that must be addressed immediately. Reducing stunting rates is an indicator of successful human resource development, which prioritises not only physical

aspects but also intellectual and social potential. In this context, empowering community groups to participate in stunting prevention is crucial. Communities with the knowledge and skills to prevent stunting can become agents of change in improving the quality of life for Indonesian children. This research is crucial for delving deeper into the role of community groups in stunting prevention and their impact on achieving Indonesia's human resource development goals.

Stunting in Indonesia remains a significant problem, with its prevalence reaching 21.6% in 2022, a decline from the previous year. These data indicate that despite government policies and programs aimed at reducing stunting rates, their impact has not been optimal. Furthermore, the higher prevalence of stunting in certain regions indicates disparities in prevention and response efforts. One of the leading causes of high stunting rates is a lack of public knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition, appropriate parenting patterns, and appropriate stimulation for child development. This demonstrates that limited sectoral approaches to addressing this problem are ineffective, necessitating a more comprehensive approach that involves the active participation of the community, particularly those with skills and knowledge in nutrition and health.

The stunting phenomenon in Indonesia is more than just a medical issue; it is also closely related to social, economic, and educational factors. Many families, particularly in rural areas and areas with high poverty rates, still lack an understanding of the importance of providing proper nutrition to their children. This lack of knowledge and awareness leads to suboptimal parenting practices, which, in turn, impact child growth and development. Furthermore, access to adequate health and nutrition services remains a challenge, particularly in remote areas. Although the government has attempted to address this problem through various programs, community participation in preventing and managing stunting remains minimal. Therefore, community empowerment is crucial in reducing stunting rates.

While much previous research has focused on health and nutrition-based interventions, little has examined the role of community groups in stunting prevention. Several studies have found that community empowerment has significant potential to reduce stunting prevalence by increasing nutritional awareness and improving parenting practices (Sari et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to be limited in their analysis of government policies or programs, without examining the concrete role that community groups can play at the grassroots level. Furthermore, most studies focus on medical and nutritional aspects rather than the social and psychological aspects that influence parenting and nutritional habits. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how community groups can be empowered to become agents of

change in stunting prevention efforts and their impact on reducing stunting prevalence in Indonesia.

Previous studies have also demonstrated the important role of educational management in community empowerment. Effective educational management can enhance community capacity in addressing stunting issues, particularly in terms of acquiring the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for providing care to their children (Yusriadi et al., 2024). Although several efforts have been made to introduce health education programs to the community, their implementation is often ineffective due to a lack of community involvement in the design and implementation of these programs. This research will develop a community empowerment-based managerial approach that is more adaptable to the local context and focuses on enhancing practical skills applicable in everyday life.

The novelty of this research lies in its multidimensional approach, which combines the roles of the community, health sector, and education in stunting prevention. This research focuses not only on analysing government policies or programs but also on assessing how community-level education management can be a crucial factor in empowering communities to be more active in stunting prevention. This approach is expected to make a significant contribution to reducing the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia by creating an environment that supports optimal child growth and development.

The primary question addressed in this research is how empowering community groups in stunting prevention can influence the reduction of stunting prevalence in Indonesia. This research will examine various factors that influence the success of community empowerment, including social, economic, and educational factors. Furthermore, this study will examine the impact of community empowerment on changes in parenting patterns, increased nutritional awareness, and support for government policies addressing stunting. By identifying and analysing the challenges and impacts of community empowerment, this study will provide valuable recommendations for developing more effective policies and programs to prevent stunting in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to identify strategies, barriers, and the impact of community empowerment on stunting prevention and provide recommendations for strengthening community-based programs. The method employed was a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of scientific publications from 2018 to 2025, obtained through Google Scholar, with strict selection based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The analysis results indicate that community

empowerment is carried out through three stages: building awareness, increasing capacity, and facilitating independence. Activities include nutrition education, childcare training, yard utilisation, and the formation of local food business groups. The main obstacles faced were low community participation, limited facilities, and socio-cultural constraints. Positive impacts include increased nutritional knowledge, improved healthy lifestyles, and family economic independence. This study emphasises the importance of educational management in the success of the empowerment program. Relevant curriculum management, ongoing training, and data-driven evaluation are key to increasing community capacity and ensuring program sustainability. Cross-sector collaboration and a locally focused, potential-based approach are necessary for achieving long-term benefits.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, a systematic literature review (SLR) was applied to answer three main research questions (RQs) related to community empowerment strategies, particularly in the context of preventing stunting in children:

1. RQ1 - What steps are taken to implement community group empowerment related to child stunting prevention programs?
2. RQ2 - What obstacles and problems arise in implementing these empowerment strategies?
3. RQ3 - To what extent does community group empowerment impact child stunting reduction and family welfare?

The following table summarises the results of nine studies related to these three research questions:

No	Author	Title	Year	Results
1	Candarma weni and Amy Yayuk Sri Rahayu	Challenges of Stunting Prevention in the New Normal Era Through Community Empowerment in Pandeglang Regency	2020	Research in Bayumundu and Tegalogog Villages, Pandeglang Regency, showed that the COVID-19 pandemic hampered stunting prevention, particularly in nutrition monitoring and immunization. However, cadres continued to provide supplementary feeding through home visits and continued the empowerment program despite the challenges. The five key elements of the program's success are planning, mentoring, training, monitoring, and product promotion. In Rowoboni Village, the Tangkas Program successfully identified the causes of stunting and implemented interventions through outreach, cadre training, and community

				education, which increased knowledge and behavior change related to providing complementary feeding and strengthened the role of cadres.
2	Dadan Hamdani, Nurul Ilmia, Assangadatur Rahmah, Indah Handayani, Nur Khasanah	Community Empowerment in Stunting Prevention Efforts	2024	Research results show that the Tangkas Program in Rowoboni Village successfully identified the main causes of stunting, such as sub-optimal parenting patterns, lack of balanced nutrition, and frequent diarrhea in children. The intervention was carried out in three stages: awareness raising, capacity building, and empowerment, which included outreach, training of integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, implementation of the 5-table system, and education for pregnant women, mothers of toddlers, and adolescents about balanced nutrition, parenting patterns, and PHBS (Clean and Healthy Living). The results showed an increase in knowledge among cadres and parents, changes in behavior regarding the provision of complementary foods, and a strengthening of the cadres' role as motivators and counselors.
3	Gunawan, Kiki Hardiansyah, Darulatica Mukhlis Abdillah, Aisyah Syaifani Sholihat, Silvia Rizqiya Fauja Nk	Towards a Healthy Digital Village: Stunting Prevention and Community Empowerment Through Digital Literacy and Entrepreneurship	2025	Stunting prevention efforts through community empowerment have been implemented, but they are not yet optimal. Communities understand the importance of nutrition, parenting, and sanitation, but their implementation is inconsistent. Integrated service posts (Posyandu), outreach programs, and the use of yards are hampered by limited facilities, fluctuating participation, and minimal innovation. Support from village governments and cadres is a key contributing factor, while the main obstacles are low community motivation, limited access to clean water, and limited capital.
	Made Rismawan, I Gede Satria Astawa, Ni Putu Riza	Community Empowerment in Monitoring Child Growth as an Effort for Early Detection and Prevention of	2025	Research in Les Village, Tejakula District, shows that community empowerment through nutrition counseling, parenting training, and yard utilization helps increase knowledge and the availability of nutritious food, thereby contributing to a reduced risk of stunting. However,

	Kurnia Indriana, Ni Made Puspita Ningrum, Ni Luh Gede Diana Wati	Stunting in Daup Village, Kintamani District, Bangli Regency		implementation is uneven due to economic constraints, limited land, and a lack of varied eating habits. Success is influenced by family support, the role of cadres, and program sustainability.
4	Muhamma d Rizky Shorfana, Rosa Amelia, Ayu Dyah Paramita, Kartika Sari	Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Dalam Menurunkan Angka <i>Stunting</i> Di Desa Jegreg Kabupaten Nganjuk	2024	A study in Jegreg Village, Nganjuk Regency, showed that community empowerment using the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) method successfully increased public awareness about stunting prevention. Nutrition counseling, supplementary feeding, youth education, and sanitation training achieved high participation and encouraged healthy habit changes. This local asset-based method has proven effective and has the potential to be implemented in other areas with similar challenges.
5	Nurul Kholillah, Sifana Nur Laila, M. Fauzul Adzim, Ainur Rofiah, Nanda Safitri, Octa Alfiani, Khoirun Nuha, Amelia Maharani, Akhriyadi Sofian	The Role of the Rejosari Village Community in Preventing Stunting in Children	2024	Results from activities at the Dahlia Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in Sungai Arang Village demonstrated that outreach, workshops, and mentoring successfully increased the understanding of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as well as Posyandu cadres, regarding stunting prevention. Cadres became skilled in nutritional assessment and counseling, while mothers began adopting healthy eating habits and maintaining good hygiene. This initiative has the potential to reduce stunting rates by increasing cadre capacity and community awareness.
6	Dewi Nurlaela Sari1, Rahma Zisca, Widyawati, Yuli Astuti, Melysa	Community Empowerment in Stunting Prevention	2023	The study results indicated that the Anti-Stunting Community Empowerment initiative in XXXX Village was effective in improving residents' understanding and skills regarding stunting prevention. Through outreach activities, a competition to create nutritious daily menus utilizing local resources, and direct guidance, all participants achieved a "good" knowledge

				rating after the intervention, increasing from 82.7% before the intervention to 100%.
7	Yessy Dekasari, Fahrizi, Tedi Gunawan	Efforts to Prevent Stunting in Toddlers in Indonesia: Community Service in Pesawaran Regency	2024	The study results showed that the stunting prevention education program in five villages in Gedong Tataan District significantly improved community understanding. Prior to the outreach, only 20.5% of participants had a good understanding of stunting, but after the program, this figure increased to 67.8%. Learning was conducted through lectures, discussions, Q&A sessions, and leaflet distribution, with a focus on women of reproductive and non-reproductive age.
8	Neng Sholihat, Azzahra Diva Yana, Wilia Ruhamma, Burhanudin Rahmat	Stunting Prevention Strategy Through Community Empowerment and Nutritional Interventions for Children in Tanjung Palas Subdistrict	2024	The research results demonstrate community enthusiasm for participation, particularly in outreach and health checks. The nutritious breakfast program received support from parents and integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, while the installation of nutrition information boards facilitated access to information on healthy eating patterns. This initiative has good potential for sustainability by involving the community, the sub-district government, and other relevant parties.

RQ1 How is community empowerment implemented in the child stunting prevention program?

Community empowerment in child stunting prevention efforts is implemented through three main phases: awareness raising, capability building, and empowerment. The awareness-raising phase aims to increase community knowledge about stunting, its causes, consequences, and prevention methods. The capability-building phase provides training to integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, pregnant mothers, and mothers with toddlers, covering skills such as anthropometric measurements, implementing the 5-table Posyandu system, nutrition counselling, and practising healthy lifestyles (PHBS). The empowerment phase aims to facilitate communities in organising Posyandu activities, providing regular counselling, and implementing healthy parenting practices. This approach positions communities as more than just recipients of support; they serve as key actors in stunting prevention efforts, ensuring the program's sustainability and long-term impact.

In contrast, research by Rismawan et al. (2025) found that community empowerment in a child stunting prevention program was carried out through a series of planned activities involving various parties, including village governments, health workers, and integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres. Core activities included nutrition counselling, parenting training, and utilising yards to grow vegetables, fruits, and medicinal plants as a source of nutritious food. The Posyandu served as a centre for health services and education, providing parents with information on the importance of balanced nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, immunisation, and environmental sanitation.

In addition to education, the program also encouraged the formation of community groups such as Women Farmers Groups (KWT), or joint business groups focused on local food production and harvest processing. These groups not only served to meet family nutritional needs but also provided opportunities for increased income. The success of the empowerment program was heavily influenced by active community participation, facility support, and ongoing support from relevant parties. Although most activities were practical, challenges remained, including limited land, insufficient business capital, and low motivation among some group members. Therefore, a consistent mentoring strategy, skills development through advanced training, and strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration networks are necessary to ensure that community group empowerment has an optimal impact on reducing stunting and improving family welfare.

The implementation of community group empowerment in the child stunting prevention program is carried out through a participatory approach that utilises local potential and involves various parties, from integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, community leaders, and village government officials. Core activities include nutrition counselling, training in creating nutritious menus based on local food ingredients, and hands-on assistance in preparing and processing food. With this approach, communities gain not only theoretical insight but also the practical skills necessary to independently meet children's nutritional needs.

In addition to education, empowerment efforts also focused on raising awareness of the importance of the first 1,000 days of life (HPK) as a crucial phase in child development. Participants participated in healthy menu competitions, group discussions, and the use of household land for nutritious food sources. As a result, community knowledge and skills improved, community participation rates were high, and healthy eating habits, based on balanced nutrition guidelines, began to develop. However, the sustainability of the program still requires regular mentoring, the provision of supporting facilities, and the strengthening of cross-sectoral collaboration networks to ensure optimal and

sustainable efforts to prevent stunting.

RQ2 What are the challenges and obstacles faced in implementing this empowerment strategy?

In Candarmaweni and Rahayu's research, challenges in implementing the community empowerment strategy for stunting prevention included obstacles caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which limited integrated health service post (Posyandu) activities and hindered nutrition monitoring; limited resources, such as land, water, and production facilities; and the community's dependence on government assistance. Furthermore, social factors such as staff turnover, multiple workloads, low knowledge of food diversification, and a lack of marketing networks also contributed to the challenges. Limited village budgets, which must be shared with infrastructure needs, also exacerbate these barriers, necessitating mentoring, ongoing training, and a shift in community mindsets toward self-reliance.

Furthermore, challenges arise from the sustainability of programs, which often stall or are suboptimal due to weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Without consistent oversight, community motivation to maintain activities such as KRPL, KWT, and yard utilisation tends to decline. A lack of innovation in leveraging local potential and limited market access means that empowerment outcomes have a limited economic impact. Therefore, the success of community empowerment strategies requires strong synergy between the government, cadres, and the community, along with consistent policy support to ensure program continuity and long-term results.

Challenges and obstacles in research (Kholifah, 2024) regarding the implementation of community empowerment strategies for stunting prevention at the Dahlia Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in Sungai Arang Village can be seen from several aspects. In terms of participation, some mothers remain less active in activities due to time constraints, household busyness, or a lack of initial understanding of the importance of stunting prevention. In terms of resources, limited facilities and inadequate nutritional measurement tools make monitoring toddler growth less than optimal. Furthermore, the limited number of integrated health posts (Posyandu) cadres, coupled with their dual workload, often hinders the continuity of intensive mentoring. From a socio-cultural perspective, there is still limited dietary diversity and parenting patterns that do not fully support children's nutritional needs, despite education. Another challenge is the limited budget for further training and the procurement of nutritious food supplements. These obstacles suggest that, despite the presence of empowerment strategies, long-term success relies on ongoing support, encompassing facilities, funding, and changes in community behaviour, to achieve the optimal goal of reducing

stunting.

In a study by Dekasari et al. (2024), the challenges and obstacles to implementing community empowerment strategies in stunting prevention programs in Gedong Tataan District were examined across several important aspects. In terms of participation, although community enthusiasm was relatively high, some target groups were still challenging to reach, such as mothers who work outside the home or who have limited time to attend counselling. In terms of initial knowledge, some participants had minimal understanding of stunting, requiring more varied and repeated delivery methods to ensure the message was well absorbed.

Another obstacle lies in the limited resources available, including the number of extension workers and supporting facilities such as teaching aids, educational media, and adequate venues for activities. Socio-cultural factors also pose challenges, such as unhealthy eating habits or deeply ingrained parenting patterns that are difficult to change even with education. Furthermore, program sustainability remains a challenge because activities tend to be short-term, whereas stunting prevention requires ongoing support and mentoring. This suggests that cross-sectoral support, adequate funding, and appropriate communication strategies are essential to overcome these obstacles and ensure the effectiveness of empowerment programs.

RQ3 How does community group empowerment impact child stunting reduction and family welfare?

Community group empowerment has a significant impact on reducing child stunting and improving family welfare. Through activities such as integrated health posts (Posyandu), nutrition counselling, parenting training, and the use of yards for food cultivation, families gain knowledge and skills that can be directly applied in their daily lives. Increased nutritional knowledge encourages parents to provide a more balanced diet for their children, thereby reducing the risk of stunting. Furthermore, utilising home gardens for growing vegetables, fruit, and raising small livestock helps provide an easily accessible source of nutritious food without having to rely entirely on market purchases.

Economically, empowerment activities such as women's farming groups or joint ventures create additional income opportunities for families. The sale of harvested or processed products provides income that can be used to meet children's health, education, and nutritional needs. Active community involvement in groups also strengthens social networks and a sense of community, which in turn motivates residents to support one another in maintaining their health and well-being. Thus, community empowerment not

only impacts children's nutritional status but also fosters family economic independence, a crucial foundation for long-term well-being.

Empowering community groups has a positive impact on reducing child stunting rates and improving family welfare by changing mindsets and behaviours related to nutrition, health, and sanitation. Through activities such as nutrition counselling, supplementary feeding, utilising home gardens for nutritious food, and sanitation training, families become more aware of the importance of meeting nutritional needs during the first 1,000 days of a child's life. These changes drive improved nutritional status, which directly reduces the risk of stunting. In addition to its health benefits, empowerment also opens up economic opportunities through the processing and sale of agricultural products or local goods, thereby increasing family income. The dual impact of improving nutrition and strengthening the economy creates a positive cycle that enhances family well-being while supporting the sustainability of efforts to prevent stunting (Shorfana, 2024).

Empowering community groups through nutrition education, healthy breakfast programs, installing nutrition information boards, and child growth checks has proven effective in reducing the risk of stunting. Residents become more aware of the importance of balanced nutrition, can manage their family's diet, and actively monitor their children's health. In addition to preventing stunting, this program enhances family well-being by promoting healthy child growth, reducing healthcare costs, increasing parental productivity, and fostering community solidarity. This empowerment also creates easily accessible nutrition information, enabling families to make informed decisions regarding their daily diets. With the active involvement of the community, the village government, and integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, this program has high potential for sustainability in maintaining child health and improving the quality of life of families in the long term.

Empowering community groups in stunting prevention provides significant theoretical contributions to education management, particularly in terms of community-based education and strengthening community capacity. The empowerment concept, which integrates nutrition, parenting, and sanitation education into community activities, enriches health education theory with an approach that emphasises active participation. This approach emphasises the importance of contextual learning that can be directly applied in daily life. Through programs such as integrated health service posts (Posyandu), parenting training, and yard utilisation, communities acquire not only theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that strengthen their ability to maintain family health. This empowerment concept highlights the importance of education that prioritises participation and provides practical knowledge to enhance the

community's quality of life.

Practically, empowering community groups in stunting prevention significantly contributes to education management by encouraging the implementation of community-based education models. Health education, training, and monitoring programs involving the community can be a more effective educational model, incorporating parents, Posyandu cadres, and community members into the teaching and learning process. This approach can serve as a reference for developing more sustainable health and nutrition education programs, enhancing the role of educators in delivering nutrition education, and promoting community participation in maintaining children's health. Furthermore, this empowerment also opens up opportunities to create strong social networks that support the sustainability of family education and health, resulting in long-term improvements in well-being and quality of life.

CONCLUSION

Based on a systematic literature review, community empowerment has proven to be an effective strategy for preventing stunting in children. Its implementation includes awareness raising, capacity building, and empowerment, positioning communities as active actors rather than simply beneficiaries. Programs such as nutrition counselling, parenting training, yard utilisation, and the formation of local food-based business groups have improved community nutritional knowledge, skills, and behaviours, while simultaneously opening up economic opportunities for families.

However, the program's effectiveness still faces challenges, including low community participation, limited facilities and resources, socio-cultural barriers, and suboptimal program sustainability. Nevertheless, community empowerment has had a positive impact in reducing the risk of stunting and improving family welfare. Long-term success requires ongoing support, cross-sector collaboration, and a locally-based approach to ensure consistent and maximally effective program implementation.

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