Health Gate
Volume 3 Number 3 July 2023 ISSN 2986-1098
Homepage: https://healthgate.ppnikotablitar.com

DOI: https://doi.org/10.70111/hg3305
Submited: July, 15 2025
Reviewed: July, 15 2025
Accepted: July, 22 2025

# Relationship Between Maternal Employment and The Incidence of Stunting

**Laily Prima Monica[1*], Ika Agustina [2], Ita Noviasari [3]**
[1,2,3] Patria Husada Health Sciences College, Blitar, East Java, Indonesia
lailyprima06@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Stunting cases continue to increase along with the high risk of malnutrition, increasing prevalence of malnutrition, and decreasing productivity. Several factors related to the incidence of stunting in toddlers include birth weight, history of infectious diseases and birth spacing. This research identifies the relationship between maternal employment and the incidence of stunting in children. The research design was cross-sectional, carried out on a population of mothers with toddlers, all of whom were taken as a sample of 20 people. Instruments used in collecting questionnaire data. The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between maternal employment and the incidence of stunting, with a p value of 0.000 ($p \leq 0.05$). These data imply that maternal employment plays an important role in children's nutritional attainment. Employment status is directly related to the household's ability to provide quality and sufficient food.

**Keywords:** Maternal Employment, stunting

## Background

Maternal health and nutrition before, during and after giving birth affects fetal growth and the risk of stunting. Pregnant women's food intake generally contains fiber, protein and energy. Mothers tend to choose foods they like without paying attention to their nutritional content, while the nutritional intake of the fetus is completely dependent on the mother, so that the nutritional adequacy of the fetus greatly influences the condition of the fetus (1). The condition of the mother before pregnancy, including body posture (weight, height and nutrition), is also one of the factors that influences the occurrence of stunting. Pregnant women who are generally short (<150 cm) will have an impact on babies who are born malnourished with a birth weight of less than 2,500 grams and a body length of less than 48 cm (2). Based on the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey, East Java Province in 2022 showed a stunting prevalence of 19.2% of the Plan target of 14%. With the prevalence of stunting (height for age) in Blitar Regency of 14.3% (2). Based on the 2022 Blitar District Health Profile, Gandusari District has a prevalence of stunted children under five of 14.5%. Data obtained from a preliminary study shows that there are 53 stunted children out of a total of 432 children in Ngaringan in 2023. Stunting cases. This condition continues to increase in line with the high risk of malnutrition, increasing prevalence of malnutrition, and decreasing productivity. If this condition is not handled properly, it could have an impact on Indonesia's development performance, inequality and poverty. Stunting is caused by malnutrition in children under two years of age, maternal malnutrition during pregnancy, and inadequate environmental sanitation (3).

The short-term impact of stunting is disruption of brain development which can impact children's intelligence, physical growth disorders and metabolic disorders. Meanwhile, the long-


Correspondent*

term impact is cognitive decline which has an impact on learning achievement, decreased immunity so that children get sick easily, and the risk of contracting degenerative diseases in old age such as diabetes, obesity, heart and blood vessel disease, cancer, stroke and disability (4). Therefore, the problem of stunting is very important to be resolved immediately. Several research results state that factors related to the incidence of stunting in toddlers include gender, birth weight, history of infectious diseases, parenting style, birth spacing, low maternal education, and father's occupation (5). When working, mothers leave their children at home to be cared for by others. This leads most mothers to stop breastfeeding before the age of 6 months (2). This is in line with Wicaksono's research in 2020 which stated that out of 20 respondents, 12 respondents had stunted children and worked as farm laborers, which is 60% (6). However, other research states that maternal knowledge, exclusive breastfeeding, family food availability and family support are supporting factors for stunting in children (7). Meanwhile, mothers who are unemployed are 66% more likely to have normal children or children without stunting. This is related to good parenting practices, as mothers are always present in the childcare process. While this has a positive impact on additional income, it also negatively impacts child development and care (8). If seen from a social perspective, working mothers who have babies will find it difficult to provide exclusive breast milk to their babies, but it is possible for them to have sufficient food availability. Therefore, researchers want to conduct research on the relationship between maternal employment and the incidence of stunting in toddlers..

## Methods

This study is a correlational type with a cross sectional study design, which looks at the relationship between maternal occupation and the incidence of stunting in children. The variables in this study include the independent variable, namely maternal occupation and the dependent variable in this study is the incidence of stunting in children. The population of this study were all mothers who have children under five years of age. The sample used in this study was 20 people. The sampling technique used by researchers is total sampling. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire in the form of written questions used to obtain data or information about the work of pregnant women and the incidence of stunting in children. This research was conducted in Ngaringan Village, Gandusari Subdistrict. The research was conducted on Monday, August 04, 2024. Data processing was done computationally using the SPSS 16.0 for windows program. Data analysis was performed by filling the null hypothesis (H0) using the Chi-Square test.

## Results

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Occupation, Information Exposure and Incidence of Stunting

| Respondents' demographic data | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Occupation** | | |
| Work in private sector | 18 | 90% |
| Housewives | 2 | 10% |
| **Information Exposure** | | |
| Ever | 13 | 65% |
| No | 7 | 35% |
| **Stunting Incidents** | | |
| No | 4 | 20% |
| Yes | 16 | 80% |
| Total | 20 | 100% |

Based on table 1. above, it is known that respondents who work as housewives are 90% and respondents who have received information about stunting are 65% of the total 20


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respondents. 80% of children are affected by stunting. Based on the results of data analysis using the Chi-Square test, a value of 0.000 was obtained with $\alpha \leq 0.05$, which means there is a relationship between maternal occupation and the incidence of stunting.

**Discussion**

Parental occupation, particularly maternal occupation, plays a significant role in determining children's nutritional status and growth outcomes. Based on recent research findings, a high proportion of mothers work in private sector (90%) correlates with a high incidence of stunting (80%) among children. The results of this study show that there is a significant relationship between maternal employment and the incidence of stunting, with a p value of 0.000 ($p \leq 0.05$). This suggests that occupation status may influence caregiving quality, time availability, and nutritional decisions. Although working parents may have higher income potential, the lack of presence during critical growth periods may negatively impact child development (9). Income from occupation is indeed a crucial factor in ensuring adequate food and health access. However, maternal factors such as time dedicated to caregiving may have a more immediate impact on stunting than income alone (10). Bivariate research results found that two variables (Education and Income) were significantly related to the incidence of stunting (p-value < 0.05) (11). Occupation may improve family income, but it also may reduce the quality of parenting, particularly breastfeeding and nutrition monitoring, which are vital in the first 1,000 days of life (2). The study found that low birth weight and length are strongly associated with stunting in later years (12)**.** These factors are also indirectly influenced by maternal occupation, as overworked or undernourished mothers often due to economic pressures may experience complications during pregnancy. Maternal nutritional status, measured by MUAC (LILA), is a predictor of newborn health outcomes. Stunting prevention requires proper antenatal care, exclusive breastfeeding, and timely complementary feeding (13). Working mothers often face difficulties in consistently implementing these practices due to time constraints and work responsibilities. The importance of antenatal services in reducing stunting, yet such services are often inaccessible or underutilized by working mothers who prioritize job obligations(14)

In addition, exposure to information is very important in shaping mothers' attitudes towards nutrition and hygiene. The results of this study found that 35% of mothers had never received information about stunting, so this could worsen the impact of not having time for their children due to work by reducing awareness and capacity to respond to their children's nutritional needs. Another dimension to consider is the social and cultural environment. Cultural norms and societal expectations regarding motherhood and occupation can influence childcare strategies (15). In communities where mothers are expected to both work and manage all child-rearing responsibilities, stunting risk may be elevated due to overburden and lack of support systems. Dietary intake remains central to preventing stunting. The importance of nutrient-dense foods for toddlers. However, time-limited working mothers may rely on quick and processed foods rather than fresh, home-cooked meals (16). Consequently, even with better financial status, nutritional intake may suffer due to poor food choices stemming from time constraints

Parenting practices and the division of maternal roles influence children's developmental outcomes. Work can hinder consistency of care and early initiation of breastfeeding, both of which are important for a child's health (8)**.** Although work can contribute to additional household income, it can reduce the quantity and quality of maternal interactions, especially in the first 1000 days of a child's life. The majority of mothers who work as agricultural laborers have children who suffer from stunting (17)**.** Even though working mothers will increase their finances, it will have an impact on their role in caring for children and as someone who plays an important role in fulfilling children's nutrition which is not optimal, resulting in the problem of


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stunting.

Pregnant women who work with a high workload contribute to insufficient nutritional intake during pregnancy (2). This condition inhibits optimal growth and development, thereby increasing the risk of stunting. Maternal non-compliance with consuming iron tablets during pregnancy and birth outcomes such as low birth weight (LBW) are associated with stunting (18). Pregnant women who work long hours often lack the time and energy to prioritize antenatal care, resulting in neglected nutritional needs and a high incidence of LBW (19). Therefore, it is important to provide stunting education to pregnant women as an effort to control stunting rates (20).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The research results showed that 90% of mothers were working, 65% had received information about stunting and 80% of mothers had stunted toddlers. Based on the results of data analysis using Chi-Square, the P-value was 0.00 ($P < 0.05$), which means there is a relationship between working mothers and stunting in their toddlers. These data imply that maternal employment plays an important role in children's nutritional attainment. Employment status is directly related to the household's ability to provide quality and sufficient food.

## Acknowledgment

We thank our colleagues from Patria Husada Health College Blitar who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research

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