

## Adolescents Knowledge on Stunting and Its Prevention Efforts as a Strategy for Building a Golden Generation

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Stunting remains a major public health problem in Indonesia because it affects physical growth, cognitive development, and the quality of human resources in the future. Stunting prevention efforts should not only focus on pregnant women and children under five but also need to target adolescents as future parents. Adolescents knowledge about stunting, balanced nutrition, anemia prevention, and reproductive health is an important factor in preventing stunting in the next generation. **Objective:** This study aims to describe adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention as a strategy for building a healthy and high-quality golden generation. **Method:** This research used a descriptive quantitative design. The population in this study were junior high school adolescents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with a total sample of 31 respondents. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire about adolescents knowledge of stunting and its prevention. Data were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables and analyzed using descriptive analysis. The research instruments used were questionnaires that had been adjusted to the research variables. **Result:** The results showed that most adolescents had a moderate level of knowledge about stunting and its prevention, with 14 respondents (45%). Meanwhile, 12 respondents (40%) had good knowledge, and 5 respondents (15%) had poor knowledge. These results indicate that adolescents knowledge about stunting prevention is generally adequate but still needs improvement through health education programs. **Conclusion:** Adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention is mostly in the moderate category. Improving adolescents knowledge through health education, peer education, and school-based programs is important for stunting prevention and has implications for midwifery practice, especially in promotive and preventive health services for adolescents.

**Keywords:** adolescents, golden generation, knowledge, prevention, stunting

## Introduction

Stunting remains a major public health problem in Indonesia as it affects the quality of future human resources. Stunting is a condition characterized by impaired growth resulting from chronic malnutrition, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life. The impacts of stunting are not only reflected in physical growth but also in cognitive development, reduced learning capacity, and an increased risk of degenerative diseases later in life. Therefore, stunting has become an important focus in health development programs aimed at creating a healthy and high-quality golden generation in Indonesia (Diadjeng Setya Wardani et al., 2025; Sari Niken Ayu Merna Eka et al., 2024).

The problem of stunting in Indonesia remains relatively high and continues to be a major challenge in efforts to achieve quality human resource development. The Indonesian government has implemented various intervention strategies to reduce the prevalence of stunting, including both specific and sensitive nutrition interventions. However, these efforts are not only focused on pregnant women and children under five but also need to be implemented starting from adolescence. Adolescents are a population group experiencing rapid growth and will become future parents; therefore, their health status and level of knowledge greatly influence the incidence of stunting in the next generation. Improving adolescents' health and knowledge, particularly regarding nutrition, anemia prevention, and reproductive health, is an important strategy in stunting prevention efforts and in preparing a healthy and high-quality future generation (Ari Syahputra et al., 2023; Sari Niken Ayu Merna Eka et al., 2024).

Knowledge is an important factor influencing the formation of health attitudes and behaviors. Adolescents who have good knowledge about stunting, balanced nutrition, and reproductive health are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors. On the other hand, a lack of knowledge may increase the risk of nutritional problems, including stunting in the next generation. Therefore, health education is an important strategy to improve adolescents knowledge as a preventive effort in stunting prevention (Haspari et al., 2024; Laraeni et al., 2024).

Adolescents have a strategic role as agents of change in society. With adequate knowledge, adolescents can contribute not only to maintaining their own health but also to disseminating health information to their peers and the wider community. Educational interventions involving adolescents have been shown to increase awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition, anemia prevention, and reproductive health readiness as preventive efforts to reduce the risk of stunting in the next generation (Pratiwi et al., 2023; Salam et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2021b).

Nutrition education based on the "*Isi Piringku*" concept among adolescent girls can improve their understanding of early stunting prevention. Increasing adolescents' knowledge about the components of balanced nutrition is one of the effective strategies in stunting prevention efforts. Therefore, improving adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention is a strategic step in preparing a healthy, intelligent, and productive golden generation in the future (Heryani et al., 2023).

Health education interventions among adolescents are effective in improving knowledge and awareness related to stunting prevention. These interventions include education on balanced nutrition, the importance of micronutrient intake, and healthy lifestyle

behaviors from an early age. Furthermore, adequate nutritional intake, including micronutrients among adolescent girls, is very important as it influences future pregnancy outcomes and the risk of stunting in their children (Lusi Lestari & Heni Heryani, 2025).

### Objective

This study aims to analyze the level of adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention efforts as a strategy for building a healthy and high-quality golden generation in the future.

### Method

This research is descriptive in nature, aimed at describing adolescents' knowledge about stunting and its prevention. The population in this study consists of junior high school level adolescents with a sample size of 31 adolescents. The measurement instrument used was a questionnaire to measure adolescents knowledge about stunting and its prevention. Data analysis was conducted using univariate analysis to obtain frequency distributions.

### Result

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Adolescents Knowledge on Stunting and Its Prevention Efforts as a Strategy for Building a Golden Generation

Knowledge	f	%
Good	12	40
Moderate	14	45
Small	5	15
Total	31	100

Based on the results of the study involving 31 respondents, it was found that the majority of adolescents had a moderate level of knowledge, with 14 respondents (45%) categorized as having sufficient knowledge. Furthermore, 12 respondents (40%) had a good level of knowledge, while a smaller proportion, 5 respondents (15%), were categorized as having low knowledge.

These findings indicate that most adolescents have an adequate understanding of stunting and its prevention as a strategy for building a golden generation. However, there are still some respondents with low levels of knowledge, indicating the need for more optimal and targeted health education interventions.

### Discussion

This study aimed to describe the level of adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention. The findings revealed that most respondents had a moderate level of knowledge (45%), followed by good knowledge (40%), while a smaller proportion (15%) demonstrated low knowledge. These results indicate that although adolescents generally have basic awareness of stunting, their understanding is not yet comprehensive. Similar findings were reported by Ilona et al. (2024), who found that adolescents tend to have moderate knowledge levels, suggesting the need for more effective educational interventions (Ilona et al., 2026).

Knowledge plays a crucial role in shaping health-related behaviors, particularly during adolescence, which is a critical developmental stage. Adolescents who possess adequate knowledge about stunting are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors, such as maintaining

balanced nutrition and paying attention to their nutritional status. Conversely, insufficient knowledge may lead to unhealthy practices that increase the risk of nutritional problems. Who identified a significant relationship between adolescents knowledge and their preventive behaviors related to stunting. Furthermore, that health interventions targeting adolescents are essential in establishing long-term healthy behaviors (Yulia N.K.Wasaraka, 2021).

The proportion of respondents with good knowledge (40%) suggests that some adolescents have already gained sufficient understanding of stunting and its prevention. This may be attributed to increased access to information through schools, healthcare programs, and digital media. Educational approaches such as peer education have been proven effective in improving adolescents knowledge. The peer-based education significantly enhances adolescents understanding of stunting prevention. That empowering adolescents through health education programs can improve their awareness and encourage preventive actions (Haspari et al., 2024; Pratiwi et al., 2023).

Structured health education interventions can significantly improve adolescents knowledge of stunting and its prevention. The significant improvement in adolescents knowledge indicates that health education is highly effective in enhancing their knowledge (Dwi Faqihatus Syarifah Has et al., 2024). The peer education method significantly improves adolescents knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding stunting and its prevention. Education through peer groups has a positive impact on improving adolescents knowledge of stunting (Rasmaniar et al., 2022).

However, the presence of 15% of respondents with low knowledge indicates that certain groups of adolescents are still not adequately reached by health education efforts. This is a concern, as limited knowledge may contribute to poor dietary habits and inadequate attention to nutritional needs. That Low knowledge among adolescents is associated with unhealthy eating patterns, which may increase the risk of stunting. Therefore, more inclusive and targeted educational strategies are necessary to ensure that all adolescents receive adequate information (Suharti et al., 2024).

Adolescents also play an important role as agents of change in the prevention of stunting. With sufficient knowledge, they can influence their peers and families by sharing health-related information and promoting healthy behaviors. The World Health Organization (2021) emphasized that empowering adolescents through education can have a broader impact on community health outcomes. Similarly, Karuniawati et al. (2024) stated that improving adolescents understanding of nutrition and reproductive health is essential in preparing a healthier future generation (Karuniawati et al., 2024; World Health Organization, 2021a).

Moreover, adolescence represents a critical period for establishing lifelong habits, including dietary practices and reproductive health awareness. Providing education on balanced nutrition and anemia prevention during this stage is essential to reduce the risk of stunting in future generations. Laraeni et al. (2024) found that nutrition education among adolescent girls significantly improves their readiness for future maternal roles. This is also consistent with the guidelines from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (2022), which highlight the importance of early interventions starting from adolescence to accelerate stunting reduction.

This study has several strengths. First, it provides a clear overview of adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention, which can serve as a basis for developing targeted health programs. Second, the use of a structured questionnaire ensured consistency

in data collection. Third, the focus on junior high school students adds valuable insight, as this age group is a key target for early preventive interventions.

Nevertheless, this study also has limitations. The descriptive cross-sectional design only captures data at a single point in time and does not allow for causal inferences. Additionally, the relatively small sample size and the focus on a single location limit the generalizability of the findings. The use of self-reported questionnaires may also introduce response bias, as participants might not fully understand the questions or may provide socially desirable answers. As noted by the World Health Organization (2020), survey-based studies often have limitations in capturing dynamic and complex health behaviors.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention is generally at a moderate level and still requires improvement. Strengthening health education programs through innovative and adolescent-friendly approaches is essential. By enhancing adolescents knowledge, it is expected that they can actively contribute to stunting prevention efforts and support the development of a healthy and high-quality future generation (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023; UNICEF, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the level of adolescents knowledge regarding stunting and its prevention is mostly in the moderate category. This indicates that adolescents already have basic knowledge about stunting, its causes, impacts, and prevention efforts, although some adolescents still have low levels of knowledge. This condition shows that health education related to balanced nutrition, anemia prevention, reproductive health, and preparation for healthy pregnancy since adolescence still needs to be improved. Adolescents knowledge is an important factor in stunting prevention because adolescents are future parents who play a role in preparing a healthy and high-quality golden generation.

Further research is recommended to analyze the relationship between knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of adolescents related to stunting prevention and to examine the effectiveness of educational methods such as peer education, digital media, or school-based health education. For midwifery practice, the results of this study indicate that midwives have an important role in providing health education to adolescents through adolescent health programs, youth posyandu, and school health education activities. Continuous education is expected to improve adolescents knowledge and support stunting prevention efforts in order to prepare a healthy golden generation in the future.

## **Conflict of Interest**

No declare.

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