



## The Relationship Between Exclusive Breastfeeding *And Weight Faltering* In Toddlers

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### ABSTRACT

*Weight Faltering* is a condition where a toddler's weight growth is stunted, which can impact their nutritional status and long-term health. One important factor influencing toddler growth is exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life. This study aims to determine the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight gain. faltering* in toddlers. This study used a quantitative analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. The study sample consisted of 80 toddlers aged 6-24 months selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through interviews using questionnaires and toddler weight measurements based on the Health Card (KMS). Data analysis was performed using the Chi-Square test. The results showed a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight loss. faltering* in toddlers with a *p value* < 0.05. Toddlers who do not receive exclusive breastfeeding have a higher risk of experiencing *weight gain. faltering*. The conclusion of this study shows that exclusive breastfeeding plays an important role in preventing *weight gain. faltering* in toddlers.

**Keywords:** Exclusive Breastfeeding, Weight Faltering, Toddler, Growth

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## 1. Introduction

Toddler growth is a key indicator in assessing a child's health and well-being. One growth issue still frequently encountered in society is *weight gain. faltering*, which is a condition where a child's weight gain does not conform to the normal growth curve based on standards set by World Health Organization (WHO). This condition is often an early sign of malnutrition, which, if not properly managed, can develop into chronic nutritional problems such as wasting and stunting.

*Weight Faltering* in toddlers is influenced by various factors, both direct and indirect. Direct factors include inadequate nutritional intake and infectious diseases, while indirect factors include parenting patterns, maternal education level, socioeconomic status, and access to health services. One important factor that plays a significant role in meeting early nutritional needs is exclusive breastfeeding.

Exclusive breastfeeding is the provision of only breast milk to babies from birth to six months of age without any additional food or drink, except for medications and vitamins recommended by healthcare professionals. Breast milk contains complete macro and micronutrients, is easily digested, and contains antibodies that play a role in boosting the baby's immune system against infectious diseases. Babies who are exclusively breastfed have a greater chance of optimal growth and development.

Although the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding have been widely demonstrated, coverage in Indonesia remains suboptimal. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health shows that the percentage of infants receiving exclusive breastfeeding remains below the national target. Low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding can increase the risk of growth disorders, including *weight gain. faltering*.

Toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed tend to be more susceptible to infectious diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections, which can interfere with nutrient absorption and reduce appetite. This condition contributes to stunted weight gain. Therefore, research on the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight gain is needed. Faltering* in toddlers is very important to provide a scientific basis in efforts to prevent child growth problems.

## 2. Research Methods

### a. Research Design

This study used a quantitative analytical design with a cross-sectional approach. This design was used to determine the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight gain. faltering* in toddlers during one observation period.

### b. Location and Time of Research

The research was conducted in the working area of Community Health Center X, which has a high toddler coverage and reported cases of growth disorders. The





research was conducted from May to July 2025, covering the preparation, data collection, and data analysis stages.

**c. Population and Sample**

The research population was all toddlers aged 6–24 months registered in the working area of Health Center X. The research sample consisted of 80 toddlers, selected using a purposive sampling technique.

**d. Inclusion Criteria**

- 1) Toddlers aged 6–24 months
- 2) Have a minimum weight record for the last three months
- 3) The mother of the toddler is willing to be a respondent and sign the informed consent form. Consent

**e. Exclusion Criteria**

- 1) Toddlers with congenital abnormalities or chronic diseases
- 2) Toddlers with incomplete growth data

**f. Research Variables**

- Independent variable: Exclusive breastfeeding
- Dependent variable: Event *weight faltering*

**g. Operational Definition**

- Exclusive breastfeeding: Giving only breast milk for the first 6 months of life without additional food or drink.
- Weight faltering: A condition in which a toddler's weight chart shows a decrease or stagnation across two consecutive growth lines on the KMS.

**h. Research Instruments**

- Breastfeeding history questionnaire
- Toddler weight data taken from KMS or KIA book

The instrument has undergone validity and reliability testing before use.

**i. Data collection technique**

Data is collected through:

- Direct interview with the mother of a toddler
- Tracking toddler growth data on KMS

**j. Data analysis**

- Univariate analysis: Frequency distribution and percentage
- Bivariate analysis: Chi- Square test

The significance level was set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

**k. Research Ethics**

This study has received ethical approval and all respondents signed an informed consent. Data confidentiality is fully guaranteed.

**3. Research Results And Discussion**





#### a. Research result

##### 1) Characteristics of Toddlers and Mothers

Most of the toddlers were 6–12 months old and male. The majority of mothers were aged 20–35 years with a secondary education.

##### 2) Distribution of Exclusive Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding	Amount	Percentage
exclusive breastfeeding	45	56.3%
Not exclusive	35	43.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Interpretation:

More than half of toddlers receive exclusive breastfeeding, but there is still a large proportion who do not receive exclusive breastfeeding.

##### 3) *Weight Incident Faltering*

Growth Status	Amount	Percentage
Weight faltering	28	35.0%
Normal	52	65.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Interpretation:

As many as 35% of toddlers experience *weight faltering*, indicating that the problem of growth disorders in the research area is still high.

##### 4) The Relationship Between Exclusive Breastfeeding and *Weight Faltering*

Exclusive Breastfeeding	Weight Faltering	Normal	Total
Yes	8	37	45
No	20	15	35

The Chi- Square test show a p value = 0.002 (< 0.05).

#### Interpretation:

There is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight Faltering*. Toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed have a higher risk of experiencing growth disorders than toddlers who are exclusively breastfed.

#### b. Discussion





The results of the study showed a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight gain faltering* in toddlers with a  $p$  value  $< 0.05$ . This finding indicates that toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed have a higher risk of experiencing growth disorders compared to toddlers who are exclusively breastfed during the first six months of life.

Exclusive breastfeeding is the most appropriate primary source of nutrition for infants in early life. The nutrients in breast milk, such as whey protein, essential fats, lactose, vitamins, and minerals, play a crucial role in supporting optimal weight gain. Furthermore, breast milk contains immunological factors that protect infants from various infectious diseases, particularly diarrhea and respiratory infections, which are known to be the main causes of growth disorders in infants.

Toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed are more likely to experience infections due to an underdeveloped immune system. These infections can decrease appetite, increase energy needs, and interfere with nutrient absorption, resulting in stunted weight gain and *weight gain faltering*. This is in accordance with the concept of *infection – malnutrition cycle* that states that infection and malnutrition mutually exacerbate each other.

The results of this study align with previous research that found exclusive breastfeeding is closely linked to a child's nutritional status and growth. Several studies have shown that exclusively breastfed toddlers have more stable weight gain than those who are not. Breast milk not only meets nutritional needs but also supports the development of the baby's digestive system, thus optimizing nutrient absorption.

Apart from the factor of exclusive breastfeeding, the incidence of *weight Faltering* can also be influenced by other factors such as complementary feeding patterns, maternal education level, nutritional knowledge, and family socioeconomic conditions. However, in this study, exclusive breastfeeding still played a dominant role in preventing *weight gain faltering*. This shows that promotive and preventive interventions related to exclusive breastfeeding are still highly relevant and need to be continuously improved.

The low coverage of exclusive breastfeeding in the study area may be due to various factors, including lack of family support, mothers' limited knowledge about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and maternal occupational factors that make it difficult to provide optimal breastfeeding. Therefore, the role of health workers, particularly midwives and nurses, is crucial in providing education, counseling, and support to breastfeeding mothers.

#### 4. Conclusion And Suggestions

##### a. Conclusion





Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and the incidence of *weight gain faltering* in toddlers. Toddlers who are not exclusively breastfed have a higher risk of experiencing stunted growth compared to toddlers who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Exclusive breastfeeding has been shown to play a crucial role in supporting optimal toddler growth and preventing *weight gain faltering*.

#### b. Suggestion

##### 1) For Health Workers

Health workers are expected to increase promotion and education regarding the importance of exclusive breastfeeding through counseling, lactation counseling, and ongoing support for breastfeeding mothers.

##### 2) For Community Health Centers and Health Institutions

Community health centers are expected to strengthen toddler growth monitoring programs and increase exclusive breastfeeding coverage through supporting programs such as classes for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers.

##### 3) For Mothers and Families

Mothers and families are expected to provide full support for exclusive breastfeeding as an effort to prevent growth disorders in toddlers.

##### 4) For Further Researchers

Further research is recommended to examine other factors related to *weight faltering*, such as complementary feeding patterns, economic status, and incidence of infectious diseases.

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