

Factors associated with stunting among Orang Asli preschool children in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Childhood stunting is recognised as one of the most significant barriers to human development. This cross-sectional study aimed to determine the factors associated with stunting among Orang Asli (OA) preschool children in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. **Methods:** A total of 264 children (50.9% boys and 49.1% girls) aged 2-6 years (M=4.04, SD=1.21 years) including their mothers from 14 OA villages in Negeri Sembilan participated in this study. Mothers were interviewed to obtain information regarding socioeconomic status, sanitation facility and personal hygiene. The height of the children and their mothers were measured. Venous blood samples were drawn from the children to estimate haemoglobin level, and stool samples were collected to screen for intestinal parasitic infections. **Results:** Approximately one third of the children (35.6%) and 7.8% of the mothers were stunted. One in five of the children were anaemic (21.6%), while one-third had intestinal parasitic infections (35.0%). Low birth weight (AOR=2.526, 95% CI: 1.310-4.872; p=0.006), anaemia (AOR=2.742, 95% CI: 1.265-5.945; p=0.011), presence of intestinal parasitic infections (AOR=2.235, 95% CI: 1.310-3.813, p=0.003), not wearing shoes (AOR=2.602, 95% CI: 1.453-4.660; p=0.001), absence of piped water at home (AOR=2.395, 95% CI: 1.047-5.476; p=0.039), dirty nails (AOR=1.956, 95% CI: 1.163-3.289, p=0.011), and stunted mothers (AOR=3.443, 95% CI: 1.334-8.890; p=0.011) were identified as significant factors for childhood stunting. **Conclusion:** It is suggested that the factors identified associated with childhood stunting be included in future intervention programmes that address stunting among OA children.

Keyword: Haemoglobin level; Sanitation and hygiene; Maternal stature; Parasitic infection; Stunting; Orang Asli children

