

Implementation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) and Its Impact on Student Well-Being and Teacher Workload Perceptions at SDN 130 Palembang

Avida¹, Tri Widayatsih², Sri Wahyu Indrawati³

^{1,2,3}Universitas PGRI Palembang

Corresponding author e-mail: Avida15@guru.sd.belajar.id

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at SDN 130 Palembang and examine its impact on student well-being and teachers' perceived workload. A qualitative case study approach was employed using in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis, while data were analyzed through the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of the MBG program generally followed established operational guidelines and contributed to improved student learning readiness, attendance, concentration, and overall well-being, although teachers experienced additional administrative and supervisory responsibilities during program implementation. The results are applicable to educational management, school nutrition policy, elementary education, public health, and educational administration by providing evidence for improving the implementation, monitoring, and sustainability of school feeding programs. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated qualitative analysis that simultaneously examines the implementation of the MBG program, student well-being, and teachers' perceived workload within a single conceptual framework, thereby offering a more comprehensive perspective for educational management and enriching the literature on school nutrition program implementation.

Keywords: *Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG); Program Implementation; Student Well being; Teacher Workload; Educational Management; Elementary School.*

A. Introduction

The quality of education is closely related to students' health and nutritional status. Adequate nutrition enables children to develop physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially, allowing them to participate effectively in learning activities. School-based nutrition programs have become an important strategy to improve educational quality because they provide students with balanced meals that support learning readiness, concentration, attendance, and academic achievement (Sari et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) has been introduced as a national initiative to improve children's nutritional status while promoting equal access to quality education through the provision of nutritious meals during school days (Seventilofa, 2025).

The implementation of the MBG program requires effective coordination among schools, teachers, local authorities, and other stakeholders. Successful implementation depends on the availability of resources, adherence to operational procedures, proper food distribution, monitoring systems, and institutional support (Lubis et al., 2026). Besides improving students' nutritional intake, the program also requires teachers to participate in supervising meal distribution, monitoring students during mealtime, completing administrative tasks, and ensuring that program activities are conducted according to established guidelines. These additional responsibilities may influence teachers' workload and affect the overall implementation of the program (Babo et al., 2026).

Student well-being has become an important indicator of educational quality because it reflects students' physical health, psychological condition, learning motivation, and classroom participation. Well-nourished students generally demonstrate better concentration, higher attendance rates, improved learning engagement, and greater academic performance (Kasi et al., 2025). At the same time, teachers play a central role in ensuring that school programs operate effectively. Therefore, understanding teachers' perceptions regarding additional workload is essential for evaluating whether the implementation of the MBG program can be sustained without reducing teaching effectiveness (Andini, 2025).

Previous studies have generally concluded that school feeding programs improve students' nutritional status, cognitive development, classroom participation, attendance, and academic achievement. Other studies have emphasized that successful implementation depends on organizational support, management quality, operational readiness, and effective coordination among stakeholders. Research has also highlighted the importance of maintaining food quality, ensuring implementation fidelity, and establishing continuous monitoring systems to maximize program outcomes. These findings demonstrate that school feeding programs provide educational, health, and social benefits when implemented effectively (Pancani & Ningsih, 2025).

Although previous studies have extensively investigated the impact of school feeding programs on students, relatively few studies have simultaneously examined how program implementation influences both student well-being and teachers' perceived workload within the same research framework (Suprpto et al., 2025). Most existing studies focus on nutritional outcomes or educational achievement without considering the operational consequences experienced by teachers during program implementation. Consequently, limited evidence is available regarding how implementation quality, student welfare, and teacher workload interact within the context of Indonesia's national Free Nutritious Meal Program (Shiddiq & Effendi, 2025).

This study addresses these limitations by providing a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program at SDN 130 Palembang. The study examines the implementation process, evaluates its contribution to student well-being, analyzes teachers' perceptions of additional workload, and explores the relationship among these three dimensions. The findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for improving program implementation, strengthening educational

management, supporting evidence-based policy development, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of school nutrition programs in Indonesian elementary schools (Wahyuniar & Pustakasari, 2025).

B. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) and its impact on student well-being and teachers' perceived workload at SDN 130 Palembang. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the natural school setting.

The research was conducted at SDN 130 Palembang, Indonesia. The participants consisted of the school principal, teachers, students, and members of the MBG implementation team. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, considering their direct involvement and experience in implementing the MBG program. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, direct classroom and field observations, and document analysis, including school reports, implementation guidelines, attendance records, and program administration documents (Siagian et al., 2025).

The research instruments included semi-structured interview guidelines, observation sheets, and document analysis checklists developed according to the research objectives and indicators of MBG implementation, student well-being, and teachers' workload. The study adopted the concepts of Program Implementation Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, School Nutrition Theory, and Teacher Workload Theory as the theoretical framework for interpreting the findings (Arifudin & Kartika, 2026).

Data analysis followed the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, and document verification to improve the trustworthiness and consistency of the findings (Siregar, 2025).

This research was conducted under natural school conditions without manipulating the implementation of the MBG program. All observations and interviews were performed during the normal implementation of the program to obtain authentic information regarding students' well-being and teachers' workload (Faizin et al., 2025). No experimental treatment, simulation, questionnaire survey, specialized laboratory equipment, hardware devices, or statistical software was used because the study was entirely qualitative and focused on understanding real-life educational practices. The methodological procedures described in this study enable future researchers to replicate the research in similar educational settings by applying the same case study design, participant selection criteria, data collection techniques, and qualitative data analysis procedures.

C. Results and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at SDN 130 Palembang has generally been carried out in accordance with the operational guidelines established by the government. The program involves collaboration among school administrators, teachers, food providers, and local authorities to ensure that nutritious meals are distributed to students every school day. The implementation process begins with meal preparation by authorized food providers, followed by delivery to the school according to a predetermined schedule. Teachers and school staff supervise meal distribution, ensure that students receive balanced portions, and monitor cleanliness and food safety throughout the implementation process. These coordinated activities demonstrate that effective planning, communication, and supervision are essential components for achieving the objectives of the program (Habibah et al., 2025).

Field observations revealed that the implementation process was conducted in an orderly manner, although several operational challenges were identified. Some teachers reported that meal distribution occasionally required additional classroom management because students became excited during meal times, resulting in slight delays before learning activities resumed. In addition, the limited number of supporting staff required teachers to assist in monitoring meal distribution and ensuring that students consumed the provided food (Marcotrigiano et al., 2023). Despite these challenges, school personnel demonstrated strong commitment to maintaining the continuity of the program because they recognized its importance for improving students' nutritional status and educational outcomes. Effective coordination among school stakeholders enabled the program to continue smoothly despite minor operational constraints (Salvador et al., 2024).

One of the most significant findings of this study is the positive contribution of the MBG program to student well-being. Teachers consistently observed improvements in students' physical condition, learning readiness, classroom participation, and overall enthusiasm for learning after the implementation of the program. Students appeared more energetic during classroom activities, showed greater concentration when completing learning tasks, and participated more actively in discussions and collaborative activities. Teachers also reported a reduction in complaints related to hunger during school hours, allowing instructional activities to proceed more effectively. These findings suggest that adequate nutritional intake contributes to improving students' cognitive performance and emotional readiness for learning (Cabrera-Ledesma et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the implementation of the MBG program appears to support better attendance and punctuality among students. Teachers explained that students were increasingly motivated to attend school regularly because they received nutritious meals during the school day. Regular attendance is an important indicator of educational quality because it provides students with greater opportunities to participate in learning activities and achieve academic success (Ikegbusi & Onwuchulum, 2025). The findings also indicate that students developed more positive social interactions during meal times, where they shared experiences, practiced discipline, and learned appropriate eating habits together. Therefore, the benefits of the program extend beyond nutritional

improvement by contributing to students' social and emotional development (Organization, 2021).

The study also identified several positive impacts on the school learning environment. The availability of nutritious meals reduced distractions caused by hunger and enabled teachers to conduct lessons in a more conducive classroom atmosphere. Students demonstrated greater attention during instructional activities, while classroom management became relatively easier because students were physically prepared to participate in learning. These observations indicate that nutrition and education are closely interconnected, and improving children's nutritional status contributes directly to creating a more effective learning environment (Leshabana, 2022).

Although the program generated substantial benefits for students, the findings reveal that teachers experienced an increase in their perceived workload during program implementation. In addition to their primary responsibility for teaching, teachers were required to supervise meal distribution, monitor students during mealtime, ensure compliance with hygiene procedures, coordinate with food providers, and complete administrative documentation related to program implementation. These additional responsibilities increased teachers' daily workload and required extra time before and after classroom instruction (Czarniecka-Skubina et al., 2023).

Most participating teachers acknowledged that the additional responsibilities demanded greater effort, particularly during the initial stages of implementation when operational procedures were still being adapted. However, teachers also expressed positive attitudes toward the program because they believed that the educational benefits for students outweighed the additional workload they experienced. They considered the supervision of meal activities as part of their broader responsibility to support students' holistic development rather than merely providing classroom instruction. This finding demonstrates teachers' professional commitment and willingness to contribute to school improvement initiatives despite increasing administrative demands (Masruroh et al., 2025).

The relationship among program implementation, student well-being, and teachers' perceived workload represents one of the most important findings of this study. Effective implementation supported improvements in students' physical and psychological well-being, which subsequently created a more conducive classroom environment. Students who were healthier and more attentive required fewer behavioral interventions, allowing teachers to focus more effectively on instructional activities. Consequently, although teachers assumed additional operational responsibilities, improvements in classroom learning conditions partially compensated for the increased workload. This finding suggests that the overall effectiveness of the MBG program depends on maintaining a balance between program implementation quality and institutional support for teachers (Danim & Khairi, 2026).

The results also demonstrate the importance of educational leadership in ensuring successful implementation. School principals played a crucial role in coordinating stakeholders, allocating responsibilities, monitoring program implementation, and

resolving operational challenges. Effective leadership encouraged collaboration among teachers, administrative staff, and external partners, thereby minimizing implementation barriers. Schools with strong organizational coordination are more likely to implement school nutrition programs successfully because responsibilities are distributed efficiently and communication among stakeholders remains effective.

These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that school feeding programs improve children's nutritional status, classroom attendance, learning motivation, cognitive performance, and academic achievement. Earlier research has also demonstrated that adequate nutrition supports brain development and increases students' ability to concentrate during learning activities. The present findings reinforce these conclusions by showing that improved nutritional support contributes not only to students' physical health but also to their psychological readiness and classroom participation.

The findings further support educational management theories emphasizing that successful policy implementation depends on organizational readiness, effective leadership, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous monitoring. The implementation of the MBG program illustrates that educational policies produce optimal outcomes when schools possess sufficient managerial capacity and effective coordination mechanisms. Teachers' active participation and school leadership significantly influenced the successful execution of daily program activities.

Regarding teachers' workload, previous studies have suggested that introducing new educational programs often increases administrative and supervisory responsibilities. The findings of this study confirm this perspective while also demonstrating that teachers generally perceive these additional responsibilities positively when they directly contribute to students' welfare and learning outcomes. Institutional support, clear operational procedures, and equitable distribution of responsibilities are therefore essential for maintaining teachers' motivation and preventing excessive workload.

The present study contributes to the existing literature by simultaneously examining three interconnected dimensions: program implementation, student well-being, and teachers' perceived workload. Previous studies have frequently focused only on students' nutritional outcomes or educational achievement. In contrast, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how school nutrition policies influence both educational management and teaching practices within elementary schools. This integrated perspective offers valuable evidence for policymakers seeking to strengthen the sustainability of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Indonesia.

Overall, the findings indicate that the implementation of the MBG program has produced positive educational and social outcomes while presenting manageable operational challenges for teachers. Continuous evaluation, adequate institutional support, improved coordination among stakeholders, and systematic monitoring are necessary to maximize the benefits of the program. Future implementation should emphasize strengthening school management capacity, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens for teachers, and ensuring that nutritional services remain sustainable. By integrating educational

management with school nutrition policy, the MBG program has the potential to become an effective strategy for improving educational quality, promoting student well-being, and supporting sustainable human resource development in Indonesian elementary schools.

D. Conclusions

This study concludes that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at SDN 130 Palembang has been successfully carried out through effective coordination among school administrators, teachers, food providers, and other stakeholders. The implementation has generally followed the established operational procedures and has demonstrated the importance of collaborative school management in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of the program. The findings indicate that the successful implementation of the program depends on adequate planning, stakeholder cooperation, continuous supervision, and institutional commitment to supporting students' nutritional needs.

The study also concludes that the MBG program has made a positive contribution to student well-being by improving learning readiness, classroom participation, concentration, attendance, and overall enthusiasm for learning. Adequate nutritional support enables students to participate more actively in educational activities while creating a healthier and more conducive learning environment. These findings demonstrate that school nutrition programs contribute not only to students' physical health but also to their cognitive, emotional, and social development, thereby supporting the achievement of educational objectives.

In addition, the study reveals that the implementation of the MBG program has increased teachers' perceived workload due to additional responsibilities related to meal supervision, coordination, monitoring, and administrative reporting. Nevertheless, teachers generally perceived these responsibilities positively because they recognized the substantial benefits of the program for students' welfare and learning outcomes. Effective school leadership and organizational support were found to be important factors in managing these additional responsibilities without significantly disrupting the teaching and learning process.

Overall, the objectives of this study have been successfully achieved by analyzing the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program, evaluating its impact on student well-being, and examining teachers' perceptions of workload during program implementation. The study further demonstrates that the integration of effective program implementation, improved student well-being, and supportive educational management creates favorable conditions for sustainable school nutrition programs. These findings provide practical implications for policymakers, school leaders, and education authorities in improving the implementation, monitoring, and long-term sustainability of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Indonesian elementary schools.

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