

Effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program Policy on Improving Students' Health Quality and Learning Productivity

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ABSTRACT

Chronic nutritional problems in Indonesia, such as malnutrition, remain a significant issue requiring continuous attention. The government has launched the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program as a strategic nutritional intervention policy, targeting school children, toddlers, and pregnant women. This program is based on the understanding that adequate nutritional intake plays a crucial role in improving health quality and supporting students' learning productivity. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program policy in improving the health quality and learning productivity of students. This research uses a qualitative method, with a case study approach, and data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis uses a thematic method. Informants in this study were students, teachers, and parents of students, selected using a purposive sampling technique. The results show that the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program has relatively high effectiveness in improving immunity, concentration, and memory. Students are more energetic and fit, which will have a positive impact on enthusiasm, motivation for student attendance, enthusiasm, and active participation in the learning process. Thus, it can improve nutritional status, health quality, and education. This research contributes to the health field by finding that the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program is effective as a long-term strategy to improve health and education quality.

Keywords: Free Nutritious Meal Program, Health Quality, Students.

I. Introduction

Education is a structured process designed to create a supportive learning environment where students can actively develop their potential. The main goal of education is to shape individuals with strong character, good morals, broad knowledge, and skills that can be used to make a positive contribution to society. Through the educational process, students are expected to improve their spiritual aspects, exercise self-control, and develop their intellectual abilities to become well-rounded individuals who are useful to their surroundings. Education also plays a crucial role in improving the quality of citizens. In addition to imparting knowledge and skills, education also contributes to shaping students' character and behavior (Azzahra et al., 2025). Quality education does not only depend on the curriculum and learning methods, but also on external factors that influence students' cognitive and physical development. One factor that contributes to educational success is adequate nutrition for school children, which plays a role in improving their thinking

skills, stamina, and learning resilience (UNESCO, 2021). Adequate nutrition allows students to focus more on the learning process, enabling them to absorb material more effectively (Herniati & Idawati, 2025).

Children are the future generation of the nation who must receive special attention to maintain their quality of life. Nutrition and health play an important role in developing quality human resources. A diet rich in nutrients can affect overall nutritional status and health. Good nutritional status contributes to a person's physical health, while inadequate nutritional intake, whether excessive or deficient, can cause health problems (Tambunan et al., 2025). Nutrition plays a vital role in child development. By fulfilling nutritional needs, such as carbohydrates as a source of energy, proteins as building blocks, and vitamins and minerals as regulators, children will remain healthy. This will help prevent various diseases that can hinder development (Wardoyo et al., 2025). Malnutrition and unequal access to education remain serious structural problems. These inequalities not only affect children's physical growth but also their cognitive and emotional development, which in turn affects their ability to learn and participate in education. The quality of human resources is a determining factor in achieving a nation's sustainable development goals. High-quality human resources not only possess academic competence but also have healthy physical and mental conditions as prerequisites for optimizing the learning process and future productivity (Agustini & Mulyani, 2025). However, chronic malnutrition in Indonesia remains an important issue that needs attention. Malnutrition occurs when nutritional intake is not balanced with the body's needs, either excessive or insufficient, which can lead to overnutrition, undernutrition, or poor nutrition (Ayuni, 2025).

Indonesia, as a developing country with a large population, faces complex challenges in improving the quality of its human resources. One crucial aspect of human resource development is meeting the nutritional needs of the population, especially for vulnerable groups such as children. The issue of child nutrition is a major concern because malnutrition can hinder their physical growth and cognitive development, which in turn can hurt future productivity and quality of life (Lendra et al., 2025). In response to this challenge, the government launched the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program as a school-based nutritional intervention policy. This program is in line with the strategy to improve the quality of human resources and supports the 2025 global targets of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Widyadari et al., 2025).

The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) is a flagship policy of the administration of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka, which is oriented towards improving the quality of human resources through meeting the nutritional needs of school children. This concept stems from the understanding that adequate nutrition plays a major role in supporting learning achievement, productivity, and the welfare of the younger generation (Dzakiah et al., 2025). This program is positioned not only as an intervention in the education and health sectors, but also as a long-term strategic step to develop superior human resources through efforts to prevent stunting and improve quality of life (Rosidin et al., 2025). However, amid hopes for the promised benefits, the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program has also faced controversy in the community. Some parties doubt the readiness of the state budget to fund this large program on an ongoing basis, especially in the context of post-pandemic fiscal pressures. On the other hand, there are concerns that the implementation of this program could cause regional disparities if it is not carried out evenly. Concerns have also arisen regarding technical aspects of implementation, such as the readiness of school infrastructure, food distribution mechanisms, and the potential for fraud in food procurement. In this context, it is important to assess whether the program truly reflects the mandate given by the people or is merely an electoral political tool (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

This raises questions about the effectiveness of the program in terms of health and productivity in achieving its objectives in the field. However, the implementation of this program in various regions still faces significant challenges. The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand whether these policies and programs are actually being implemented properly. This study aims to examine in depth the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program policy on improving the quality of health and learning productivity of students. This study covers program effectiveness indicators according to Edy Sutrisno (2007), consisting of program understanding, targeting, and achievement of objectives. In addition, this study also examines the

perceptions of school communities, as well as the challenges and recommendations in its implementation. Therefore, this study addresses the question: How effective is the Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in improving the quality of health and learning productivity of students?

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This study reviews several previous theories and studies as the basis for the researcher's analytical perspective, as outlined below:

2.1. Effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) Policy on Improving Student Health and Learning Productivity

a. Understanding the Program

Kiftiyah et al (2025) explain that the Free Nutritious Meals Program indirectly serves as an effective means of mass nutrition education, as children become agents of change in their families' eating habits. The Free Nutritious Meals Program has created positive changes in consumption behavior, both at school and at home. Some schools even report an increase in parental participation in supporting healthy eating habits in children after the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (Aisyah et al., 2025). Behavioral change in the community and at the school level is another very important challenge. The Free Nutritious Meals program not only focus on providing food, but also on raising awareness of the importance of consuming healthy food. If nutrition education is incorporated into the program and there is active parental involvement, the benefits of the program will be long-lasting (Albaburrahim et al., 2025). (Nurwakhid & Fridiyanti, 2025) found contradictory findings stating that despite the free lunch program, efforts to increase healthy food choices in schools have been made. However, children continue to consume unhealthy foods, making the program inconsistent in addressing stunting.

b. Targeted

Milati et al (2025) shows that the program has been implemented according to technical guidelines through a food provision mechanism by MSMEs/satellite kitchens, distributed to schools, and consumed by students. Field data shows that most schools receive food portions according to schedule, although there are variations in menu quality and delays in distribution on some days of implementation. Contradictory findings by (Kiftiyah et al., 2025) reviewed the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program and found that the government is focusing on developed areas. The government should frequently review the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program in 3T (underdeveloped, outermost, frontier) areas so that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program focuses on these areas. As we know, the characteristics of each school and its students are very diverse, especially in 3T (underdeveloped, frontier, outermost) areas, which require more attention from the government. The imbalance in implementation shows the importance of Rawlsian's (1971) approach in his major work entitled A Theory of Justice, in which the state needs to strengthen its corrective role against inequality in access to nutrition. In the context of policy implementation, the findings confirm the importance of a systematic and coordinated monitoring system (Widyasari et al., 2025).

c. Achievement of Objectives

Qomarullah et al (2025) indicates that the Free Nutritious Meals program (MBG) contributes to reducing the prevalence of stunting and malnutrition among school-age children, while also increasing student attendance in class and improving their academic achievement. Mentioned that within three months of implementing the Free Nutritious Meals program, more than 60% of children who were initially in the underweight category successfully moved to the normal category. This intervention is effective because the

meals provided have been designed to meet daily calorie and macro-micro nutrient standards, including complex carbohydrates, animal/vegetable protein, vegetables, and fruit.

The positive impact of this program can be seen from the responses of the majority of students who feel more enthusiastic about learning after participating in the program. This means that the program not only affects students physically, but also psychologically, increasing their motivation to learn. The positive impact of the Free Nutritious Meals program on students is significant, including increased motivation and focus on learning, enthusiasm for going to school, reduced absenteeism, and assistance in regulating meal times and reducing spending money. Students feel happy and regretful if they are absent (Wiranata et al., 2025). The most significant benefit for students is that they do not need to bring lunch from home and can eat healthy food at school. Some also mentioned that they can try new foods and ease the burden on their parents (Azka et al., 2025). The positive impact of the Free Nutritious Meals program on students is significant, including increased motivation and focus on learning, enthusiasm for going to school, reduced absenteeism, and assistance in regulating meal times and reducing spending money. Students feel happy and regretful if they are absent (Wiranata et al., 2025). This study found that adequate nutrition plays an important role in supporting students' cognitive abilities, concentration, and motivation to learn. With the Free Nutritious Meals program, students can meet their nutritional needs regardless of their family's economic background, thereby creating a more optimal learning environment (Hasibuan et al., 2025).

After the program was implemented, student attendance continued to increase. The rate of student absenteeism due to illness decreased by 12% in the first year of implementation, according to monitoring data. Students who are in better health are more likely to attend classes consistently, which ultimately has a positive impact on their learning outcomes. High attendance is a key predictor of academic success. Therefore, this reduction in absenteeism is very important (Situmorang et al., 2025). The Free Nutritious Meals Program has the potential to have a significant impact on reducing child nutrition problems in Indonesia, particularly stunting, anemia, and double malnutrition. By providing regular nutritious meals at school, children receive the macro and micronutrients they need, thereby reducing the risk of stunting due to energy and protein deficiency. In addition, the provision of iron-rich foods and animal protein can contribute to reducing the high prevalence of anemia among school-age children. In the long term, improving children's nutritional status will have an impact on more optimal cognitive development, better concentration in learning, and improved academic achievement (Syamsu et al., 2025).

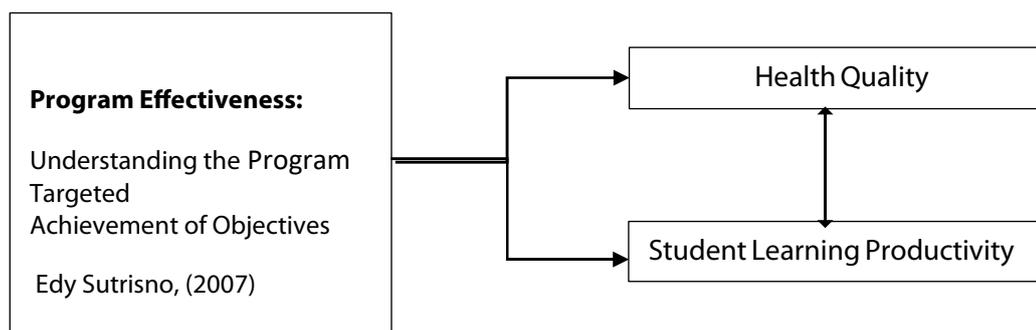


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach, with a case study method to analyze the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program policy on improving the quality of health and learning productivity of students. The qualitative method is a research approach used to understand social phenomena from a deep and complex perspective. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for gaining new insights from new situations in depth regarding the experiences and responses of various parties.

3.1. Locations and Informants

This research was conducted at MA Muhammadiyah Palleko. The informants in this study were students, teachers, and parents of students.. The sampling technique (informants) used purposive sampling to select informants who were most knowledgeable, relevant to the topic, and had direct experience in the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program.

3.2. Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with informants, namely students, school principals, teachers, and parents of students, to explore the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals program in improving students' health and learning productivity. Observations were conducted at schools to observe students' patterns, reactions, and responses to the Free Nutritious Meals program, as well as any obstacles that arose during its implementation. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect secondary data from documents, archives, or records to complement the data from interviews and observations. Narrative recording and triangulation techniques were used to increase data validity.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews were analyzed thematically, by identifying patterns, themes, and categories that emerged from the informants' narratives. The thematic analysis process was conducted through six stages, namely: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts; (2) initial coding to identify relevant meaning units; (3) searching for themes by grouping codes with similarities; (4) reviewing themes to ensure consistency and coherence; (5) defining and naming themes clearly; and (6) compiling a report by integrating interview quotes as illustrations of findings. Data analysis was conducted iteratively and reflexively, by comparing information from various sources to ensure the validity and reliability of research findings.

Table 1. Research Informant

No	Name	Gender	Position	Information
1	A.D.A	W	Teacher	Key
2	N.N	W	Student	Supporting
3	Z.A.S	M	Student	Supporting
4	S.R	W	Student	Supporting
5	A.I	M	Student	Supporting
6	R.R	W	Student	Supporting
7	R.B	M	Parents of Students	Supporting

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1. Analysis Result

The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) has received positive responses from various parties, ranging from students and teachers to parents. Based on interviews with several students, most of them gave positive responses, saying that they were happy with the Free Nutritious Meals program. One student representative said that the Free Nutritious Meals program made him and his friends feel more energetic and enthusiastic about their learning activities at school. Not only that, they also felt an increase in focus and memory after receiving nutritious meals. Students feel comfortable studying until the afternoon when their stomachs are full, the learning atmosphere is more conducive, their concentration increases, and the results

are more optimal. Happiness is also felt by other students who say that they are happy because every day they can enjoy healthy food at school, the food tastes good, they feel more energetic and less tired, which makes them more enthusiastic and stronger to study until the last hour. This finding aligns with (Risnawati et al., 2025) revelation that the Free Nutritious Meal Program makes the majority of students more prepared to learn after eating nutritious meals at school because their bodies are full and refreshed. This shows that the Free Nutritious Meal Program plays an important role in supporting learning effectiveness and fostering a healthy, comfortable, and productive learning environment.

Before the Free Nutritious Meals program was introduced, students often bought snacks that were not necessarily hygienic. After the Free Nutritious Meals program was introduced, their eating habits improved. Many students felt healthier and fitter, which motivated them and increased their desire to always attend school because they wanted to enjoy free nutritious meals and try new foods that awaited them. These findings are in line with (Pangera et al., 2025) observation that students showed great enthusiasm for this program, and student attendance became more regular than before. This shows that the program succeeded in attracting students' attention and providing additional motivation for them to come to school. In addition, students admitted that this program not only made them full, but also helped them save money. He added that the food from the Free Nutritious Meals program feels more hygienic and healthy compared to snacks outside of school. They believe that the Free Nutritious Meals program not only has a direct impact on their physical health, but also supports the quality of education through increased motivation to learn. The majority of students said they want this program to continue, showing their full support for the program's sustainability.

Student responses to the Free Nutritious Meals menu have been mostly positive so far. However, given that everyone has different tastes, some students dislike the fried fish menu. Students also say that sometimes there are foods such as tofu that are too hard in texture, which puts them off eating even though they actually like the taste of tofu. Mini packaged milk drinks are sometimes unavailable, and the menu and fruit selections lack variety, making them seem boring and monotonous. Students hope for an increase in variety and flavor in the food menu to prevent it from feeling monotonous. Based on interviews with teachers, the Free Nutritious Meals program has had a positive impact on student morale and attendance. Students appear to be more focused and energetic since the program has been running consistently. Teachers welcome this program. Students are more motivated to learn because their physical condition is maintained. With healthy bodies and fresh minds, academic and non-academic achievements are easier to improve. These findings are in line with (Nurulaini & Affah, 2025) findings that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) in schools has been running well and has had a positive impact on improving students' nutritional status, motivation to learn, and healthy eating behaviors. The menu provided includes carbohydrates, protein, fiber such as vegetables and fruit, and milk, in accordance with the needs of school-age children. Evaluating this program helps students, especially in maintaining their stamina while participating in learning activities at school.

By getting adequate nutrition before class, students enter the classroom feeling fresher and more stable. Teachers observe that students find it easier to concentrate, are less sleepy, and understand instructions more quickly. Teachers say that students are more focused, easier to guide, respond more quickly, and are able to understand the material better. They appear to be more active in asking questions, giving opinions, and participating in group discussions. These findings are in line with (Rosidin et al., 2025) which states that this program has had a positive impact on increasing student attendance, enthusiasm for learning, and motivation to participate in school activities. The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) is not only about nutritious food, but also a means of social education that develops characteristics through positive behavior and fosters a sense of togetherness, discipline, and caring among students. Teachers hope that the menu will be more varied so that students' nutritional needs are better met. Teachers also hope that this program can continue by maintaining quality standards and reaching all schools equally so that its benefits can be felt more widely. According to them, supporting children's nutritional needs is an important investment in creating a healthy and accomplished generation.

Based on an interview with one of the students' parents, they expressed their gratitude because their child is now more enthusiastic about going to school and more energetic. The students' parents also welcomed the Free Nutritious Meals program. They feel relieved knowing that their children are getting nutritious meals. The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) helps prevent children from buying unhealthy snacks outside of school. This helps reduce parents' concerns about their children buying unhealthy snacks. Parents also said that so far, they have seen their children's weight become more ideal after consistently consuming a balanced and nutritious diet. These findings are in line with (Nasir, 2025) findings, which show that the majority of parents consider the provision of Free Nutritious Meals to be more than just a means of fulfilling physical needs, but also to have a positive impact on their children's enthusiasm and concentration. From a nutritional perspective, parents also stated that this program contributes to improving their children's eating habits. With the provision of Free Nutritious Meals, children's nutritional needs are better met. In addition, parents of students are grateful for the Free Nutritious Meals program, as it helps reduce the burden on parents by eliminating the need to pay for breakfast and lunch for students. They also feel relieved because they no longer have to prepare meals every morning, as the Free Nutritious Meals program makes things easier. These findings are in line with (Mursyidah et al., 2025) findings that the Free Nutritious Meals program not only functions as a nutrition program but also has the potential to reduce the economic burden on families and increase awareness of the importance of fulfilling children's nutritional needs. Parents of students hope that the Free Nutritious Meals program will be implemented consistently, starting with the meal menu and the quality of the meals served. The Free Nutritious Meals program is a good step to support the nutrition of school children. However, parents hope that there will be strict standards and supervision regarding the quality of food in the kitchens that provide the meals.

4.2. Discussion

a. Effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) on Improving Health Quality

1) Enhancing Immune System

It is not just about feeling full; each component has an important function for the growth and development of students. The Free Nutritious Meal menu is designed according to the nutritional needs of school children. In one plate of the Free Nutritious Meal, students get vegetables and fruits that contain vitamins and minerals to build strong immunity. Protein helps muscle, brain, and cell growth. Carbohydrates are a source of energy for learning. Providing healthy drinks such as milk can maintain body fluids and concentration. Adequate nutrition can help build a strong immune system, improve focus on learning, and encourage physical activity, thereby contributing to disease prevention and improving student health.

2) Maintaining Ideal Body Weight

Good nutrition in children plays a very important role in supporting their optimal growth and development. Adequate nutrition can help children achieve their ideal weight. The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) can prevent obesity and underweight. Excess weight in children can cause various health problems, such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. If implemented correctly, the free nutritious meals program can help reduce the prevalence of obesity by providing healthier meals with controlled portions. Childhood obesity is becoming a serious problem, especially with eating patterns that tend to favor fast food that is high in sugar and fat. In addition to preventing obesity, the protein in the Free Nutritious Meals menu, such as lean meat, eggs, chicken breast, dairy products, or nuts, is very important for building muscle mass so as to prevent underweight.

3) Preventing Various Health Problems Due to Nutritional Deficiency

By consuming a balanced and nutritious diet every day, children who were previously nutritionally deficient can obtain more balanced nutrition, which will support optimal growth and development. Data from

the 2024 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) shows a national stunting prevalence of 19.8% (approximately 4.48 million). If implemented in a targeted and consistent manner and provides high-quality nutritious food, the Free Nutritious Meals program can have a positive ripple effect. The most significant impact is improved health and nutrition. With adequate nutrition, children will grow optimally and avoid health problems such as anemia, malnutrition, stunting, and achieve nutritional equality.

b. The Effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) on Improving Student Learning Productivity

1) Improving Focus and Memory

Quality education is not only determined by the content of the curriculum or teaching strategies in the classroom, but is also greatly influenced by various external factors that contribute to the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of students. One factor that plays an important role in determining children's learning success is adequate nutrition. Malnutrition can cause decreased brain function, fatigue, and developmental disorders that result in poor learning outcomes. The Free Nutritious Meals Program plays a role in promoting improved comprehension and memory in students. The meals provided in the Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) contain a balanced variety of nutrients, such as carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and iron. Iron is also an important component in brain development because it plays a role in myelin production and neurotransmitter synthesis. Iron deficiency can cause iron deficiency anemia, which affects students' focus and memory. Good nutrition plays an important role in maintaining physical health, improving concentration, and supporting emotional balance. Adequate nutritional intake also ensures optimal blood supply to the brain, thereby supporting students' memory and learning abilities. Students appear more enthusiastic about participating in learning activities, do not feel hungry, do not get sleepy easily, so that their understanding of the material becomes more optimal and they demonstrate sharper thinking skills than before. In this context, free nutritious meal programs can be an important factor in improving academic test results, especially in subjects that require concentration.

2) Improving School Attendance

Providing nutritious meals can affect student attendance rates. Students show great enthusiasm for the Free Nutritious Meals program. They seem more excited to wake up in the morning, leave for school earlier, and rarely miss school days. Many students feel motivated to attend school because they want to enjoy the nutritious meals that are provided. Students who do not get enough food at home tend to be absent more often, either due to poor health or because they cannot focus in class. The free nutritious meal program reduces this obstacle by ensuring that all children get enough food every day. Students feel more energetic and motivated to come to school. Increased student attendance also creates a more active and conducive learning atmosphere in the classroom. Thus, in addition to nutritional benefits, this program can also contribute to increased attendance, which of course has a positive impact on students' academic performance.

3) Positive Character Development

Through the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program, students not only receive healthy meals, but also learn life values that shape their discipline, responsibility, and character. The Free Nutritious Meals program plays a role in shaping students' character through the habit of positive behavior and the instilling of values such as healthy eating habits, washing hands before eating, praying, and eating in an orderly and polite manner. It also aims to build students' overall character through the teaching of table manners, such as appreciating the food served and fostering gratitude. It fosters responsibility for the food they consume by encouraging students to clean their eating utensils after use. Furthermore, the implementation of Free Nutritious Meals has also had an impact on increasing students' interest in learning.

With better physical condition, students become more enthusiastic about learning. They are more active in asking questions, giving opinions, and participating in group discussions. This is reflected in increased activity and initiative in learning that is evident during the learning process. Therefore, the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals program for students not only provides them with healthy food, but also teaches them life values that shape them into active, disciplined, responsible, and characterful individuals.

c. Recommendations to Improve the Effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals Program

1) Improving Food Quality Control

Food safety is a crucial foundation and aspect of the MBG program, and supervision must be ensured to be carried out thoroughly and in accordance with standards. There needs to be a clear commitment from the government to respond quickly, improve and strengthen the management system of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program as a whole. Ensure that the supervision and monitoring of food safety for the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program is carried out more strictly. This strict supervision aims to ensure that the food served is safe and free from physical, chemical, and biological hazards. The main aspects that must be considered are the quality of raw material procurement, processing, clean water management, packaging, food presentation, and ensuring that the food is safe and nutritious when consumed by students. The nutritional content of the Free Nutritious Meals menu must be balanced, including carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water. Program providers and managers must also increase the distribution of milk as a nutritional supplement derived from animal protein sources in the food menu. Of course, this must be done while paying attention to and ensuring that the milk provided meets standards, such as being low in sugar, low in calories, and so on.

From a public nutrition perspective, providers and managers must ensure that the Free Nutritious Meals program (MBG) can truly help reduce the prevalence of nutritional problems such as stunting, anemia, and others. In addition, the presence of personnel, such as cooks, nutritionists, and raw material suppliers in every Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) kitchen, must be professional in accordance with their background, field, and expertise. Food safety is a shared responsibility across sectors. Health and education agencies, food providers, and schools must work together to ensure that the food provided is safe and nutritious. Collaboration with schools. In addition to monitoring production, it is important to monitor the recipients, namely schools, in checking the quality of food before consumption. Schools must actively assist, monitor, and ensure the quality and menu of Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) are suitable for consumption, and have a clear communication channel for complaints or feedback.

2) Education for Parents of Students and the Community

The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) not only has an impact on physical health, but also on the quality of education and the awareness of the younger generation in choosing healthy foods. However, the success of this program does not only depend on the organizers, but also on the active involvement of parents and the community. The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) cannot stand alone. The importance of continuous nutrition education, both at school and at home. The Free Nutritious Meals Program must be balanced with an increase in parents' understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition for each family member and its broad impact on the community. Educating the community about increasing balanced nutrition for families is a strategic step that must be taken. Parents play an important role in directly monitoring their children's nutritional intake. Meanwhile, the community helps ensure that the distribution and monitoring processes are transparent and hygienic. Various measures supporting a number of programs to improve community nutrition must be consistent, so it is necessary for the community to have a common understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition for every child of the nation.

V. Conclusion

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Indonesia is a strategic step to improve nutritional status, health quality, and education. This program shows high effectiveness in preventing various health issues like stunting, obesity, anemia, and underweight by boosting energy and immunity. The Free Nutritious Meal Program contributes to enhancing students' learning productivity by improving concentration, memory, comprehension, attendance, and participation in learning, alongside providing nutrition education. However, its effectiveness isn't yet optimal due to some implementation challenges. Policy implications or recommendations to ensure sustainability and boost effectiveness include stronger governance, transparency, integrity in management, stricter supervision, consistent distribution, improved food quality, and continuous evaluation. Collaboration between central government, local governments, oversight bodies, schools, and communities is crucial to make the Free Nutritious Meal program targeted, effective, efficient, and sustainable. With strict oversight and good cooperation, the Free Nutritious Meal program has great potential to enhance health and education quality, supporting a healthy and smart future generation.

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