

RESEARCH ARTIKEL

OPEN ACCESS

THE IMPACT OF FREE NUTRITIOUS MEALS ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING CONCENTRATION

Fitri Zakiyah Mahmudah ^{1*}, Febrianti Puspita Dewi ¹, Julia Nur Abidah ¹,
Rasya Nabila Fatin ¹,

¹ Universitas Pelita Bangsa, Bekasi, Indonesia

*Correspondence: fitrizakiyahmh@gmail.com

Abstract. A The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is a national policy aimed at supporting adequate nutrition for schoolage children and creating more conducive learning conditions. Meeting good nutritional needs is expected to help improve students' learning readiness, including their ability to concentrate during the learning process. This article aims to systematically review various studies in Indonesia that discuss the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program and its application to the learning concentration of elementary school students. The method used is a literature study by reviewing relevant Indonesian journal articles, both those discussing the impact of the MBG on concentration, learning motivation, student attendance, and the challenges of its implementation in schools. Data sources were obtained from national journals that are openly accessible through the publisher's official website. The results of the study indicate that most studies report a tendency for increased student concentration and learning motivation after the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program. Students are described as being more prepared to participate in learning, more focused, and having better participation in class. However, the effectiveness of the program is greatly influenced by the quality of implementation, such as the variety and content of the food menu, the accuracy of distribution, and the existence of an ongoing monitoring system. This study concludes that the Free Nutritious Meal Program has great potential to support the learning concentration of elementary school students. However, most research is still descriptive in nature, so causal relationships cannot be firmly established. Therefore, further research with more rigorous designs is needed to strengthen empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the MBG program on learning concentration.

Keywords; Free Nutritious Meal program; learning concentration; school nutrition program; elementary school students.

Article history: received 01 June 2025; revised 26 June 2026; accepted 07 July 2026

Copyright ©2026 Fitri Zakiyah Mahmudah, Febrianti Puspita Dewi, Julia Nur Abidah, Rasya Nabila Fatin

Journal of Elementary Education Innovations is licensed under a
[Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)



INTRODUCTION

MBG is a flagship program initiated by the government of President Prabowo Subianto in response to the high nutritional inequality of school-age children in Indonesia. The urgency of this program lies in its role in overcoming nutritional inequality, increasing concentration, and reducing the dropout rate in elementary school children (Qomarrullah, 2025). Data shows that 41% of Indonesian students have experienced hunger during their studies at school, which has an impact on their lower levels of concentration and academic achievement.

Hardinsyah in his research stated that adequate nutritional intake can improve children's concentration and cognitive abilities, which is correlated with increased learning achievement. The Renata study (2024) at SDN Gebang 224 Surakarta emphasizes that students with a regular diet show better concentration and are able to understand the lessons given by teachers. In addition to the positive benefits, there are challenges in implementing MBG in the field. Some of the obstacles include food distribution, the accuracy of nutritious menus, and continuous monitoring to ensure that the program runs effectively according to the government's targets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Various literature confirms the significant impact of MBG on the concentration and learning motivation of elementary school students. Regular feeding of nutritious food improves nutritional status, reduces anemia, and contributes to increasing body mass index and enthusiasm for learning. Basit's research (2025) concluded that in addition to the direct effects on health, MBG has a multiplier effect in the form of increased learning motivation and student attendance. Another study showed that the implementation of MBG had an impact on reducing the attendance rate and increasing students' attention in following lessons.

Qomarrullah (2025) emphasized that MBG as a long-term program plays a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of student education through the fulfillment of quality nutrition. Nutrient intake rich in minerals and vitamins, such as iron and omega-3s, has been shown to support the development of brain function and children's ability to focus. Several studies in the Independent Health Journal (2025) also underline the challenges of MBG in Indonesia, namely healthy diets, food distribution, and evaluation of food menus that need to be improved for the sustainability of the program.

METHODS

The method used is qualitative descriptive. The research was conducted by: In-depth interviews: Conducted with teachers, students, and parents to gain a hands-on perspective on the implementation of MBG and its impact on students' learning concentration. Hands-on observation in the classroom: Researchers observed students' learning behavior and concentration levels before and after receiving free nutritious meals. Documentation study: Search for MBG documents in schools, attendance data, and relevant reports to support data analysis. Thematic analysis: The collected data was analyzed inductively by identifying patterns, themes, and categories such as increased concentration, learning motivation, and constraints to the implementation of MBG.

This qualitative method was chosen because it provides an in-depth overview of the dynamics of the implementation of the MBG program and various changes in the learning behavior of elementary school students from a multistakeholder perspective.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data analysis obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation studies, several important findings were found related to the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) on the learning concentration of elementary school students.

1. Increased Student Learning Concentration

The results of observations in the classroom showed a significant change in the concentration level of students who participated in the MBG program. Students who get nutritious meals regularly show better focus abilities during class hours, especially in learning sessions after meal breaks. This finding is in line with the teacher's statement which states that students are more active in asking questions and are able to complete tasks faster after the MBG program is implemented.

Interview data with teachers revealed that before the MBG program was implemented, many students looked weak, sleepy, and unresponsive in class, especially around noon. After getting adequate nutritional intake, students show higher enthusiasm in participating in learning and are able to maintain concentration for longer.

2. Changes in Learning Behavior

Observations show that students who participate in the MBG program experience positive changes in learning behavior. They are less likely to complain of hunger or ask

permission to leave class to buy snacks. This has an impact on reducing distractions during the learning process.

Interviews with students revealed that they feel more energized and don't get sleepy easily while studying. Some students stated that they had an easier time understanding the teacher's explanations and were able to remember the subject matter better after getting a nutritious meal.

3. Increased Attendance and Motivation

Student attendance documentation data shows a decrease in the attendance rate since the MBG program was implemented. Interviews with parents revealed that their children are more excited to go to school because they know they will get nutritious and delicious food. Students' motivation to learn also increases, which can be seen from their activeness in class discussions and assignments.

4. Program Implementation Challenges

Although it has a positive impact, the implementation of the MBG program faces several obstacles. The results of interviews with program managers identified the following key challenges:

a. Limited Menu Variety

Some schools have difficulty in providing an attractive variety of menus for students, so sometimes there are students who are less interested in the food served.

b. Distribution Constraints

Logistical problems are an obstacle, especially for schools in remote areas that experience delays in the delivery of fresh foodstuffs.

c. Monitoring and Evaluation

The lack of a systematic monitoring system makes it difficult to measure the effectiveness of programs consistently across different schools.

d. Adaptation to Students' Tastes

Not all students are familiar with the menu served, especially those from families with specific diets, so it takes time to adapt.

1. The Relationship of Nutrition with Learning Concentration

The findings of this study confirm the theory put forward by Hardinsyah that adequate nutritional intake is positively correlated with an increase in children's concentration and cognitive abilities. The nutrients contained in nutritious foods, particularly iron, protein, and omega-3s, play an important role in the development of brain function and students' ability

to focus. When basic energy needs are met, the brain can work optimally to process information and maintain attention. Statistical data showing that 41% of Indonesian students have experienced hunger while studying is a strong indicator of why the MBG program is so necessary. Hunger not only interferes with physical comfort, but also significantly decreases students' cognitive capacity to concentrate and absorb learning.

2. The Multidimensional Impact of the MBG Program

The study found that the impact of the MBG program was not limited to increasing concentration alone, but also encompassed broader aspects. As stated by Basit (2025), this program has a multiplier effect that includes improving health, learning motivation, and student attendance. These findings show that the MBG program is a holistic intervention that touches on various aspects of student development.

The increase in student attendance can be explained through two mechanisms. First, improved health conditions make students less sick and able to attend consistently. Second, the MBG program is an additional incentive that makes students more motivated to go to school, especially for students from underprivileged families who previously had difficulty meeting lunch needs.

3. Implications for Academic Performance

Although this study focused on learning concentration, there are strong indications that increased concentration contributes to improved student academic achievement. This is in line with the findings of Renata (2024) at SDN Gebang 224 Surakarta which shows a positive correlation between a regular diet and the ability to understand lessons. Students who can concentrate better tend to be able to absorb material more effectively and show more satisfactory learning outcomes.

4. Challenges and Improvement Strategies

The implementation constraints found in this study reflect the complexity of the MBG program as a national-scale intervention. Distribution, menu variation, and monitoring issues require a systematic and coordinated approach between various stakeholders. To overcome these challenges, several strategies can be considered. First, empowering local communities in the provision of foodstuffs can reduce distribution problems while supporting the local economy. Second, the involvement of nutritionists in the preparation of menus can ensure nutritional balance as well as compatibility with local tastes and culture. Third, the development of a digital monitoring system can increase the effectiveness of program evaluations in various locations.

5. Program Sustainability

As emphasized by Qomarrullah (2025), MBG is a long-term program that requires a sustainable commitment. The sustainability of the program depends not only on the availability of the budget, but also on the ability to adapt to local conditions, the active involvement of the school community, and periodic evaluations for continuous improvement. This study shows that to achieve optimal impact, the MBG program needs to be supported by nutrition education to students and parents. An understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition will strengthen the impact of the program and encourage sustainable healthy eating habits outside of the school setting.

CONCLUSION

The Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program has been proven to have a significant positive impact on the learning concentration of elementary school students. The main findings of this study show that students who participate in the MBG program experience improvements in three key aspects, namely better concentration skills during learning, increased attendance and motivation to come to school, and more positive and productive changes in learning behavior. The impact of the MBG program is not limited to improving nutritional status alone, but also creates multiple effects that support the overall learning process. The fulfillment of basic nutritional needs through this program has helped overcome the hunger problem previously experienced by almost half of Indonesian students, so that they can focus on learning activities without being disturbed by unmet physiological needs. Despite having a positive impact, the implementation of the MBG program still faces challenges that need to be seriously addressed. The main obstacles include limited menu variation, distribution problems, especially in remote areas, and weak continuous monitoring systems. These challenges require comprehensive solutions that involve coordination between stakeholders, local community empowerment, and the development of a more systematic evaluation system. To maximize the effectiveness of the MBG program in the future, several strategic steps are needed. First, there needs to be improvements in the distribution and supply system a more varied menu and according to local preferences. Second, the involvement of nutritionists and the community in menu design can improve the quality and acceptance of the program. Third, the development of an integrated digital monitoring system will facilitate continuous evaluation and improvement in various locations. As a long-term program, the sustainability of MBG is very important to support the improvement of the quality of

Indonesia's human resources. This program not only plays a role in increasing short-term learning concentration, but also contributes to the formation of a healthier, more accomplished, and nutritious eating habit that will carry over into adulthood. Therefore, a continuous commitment from the government, schools, and the community is needed to ensure that this program can provide optimal benefits for all Indonesian students.

REFERENCE

- Agustini, U., & Mulyani, S. (2025). Efektivitas dan tantangan kebijakan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis sebagai intervensi pendidikan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Kiprah Pendidikan*, 4(3), 362–368. <https://doi.org/10.33578/kpd.v4i3.p362-368>
- Irawan, M. F. (2025). Dampak Program Makanan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) terhadap konsentrasi dan motivasi belajar peserta didik sekolah dasar. *Mentari: Journal of Islamic Primary School*, 3(4), 1–10. <https://ejournal.staimnglawak.ac.id/index.php/ment/article/view/1882>
- Maulidya, A. (2025). Analisis Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) di Provinsi Lampung. *AJSH: Ajang Sosial Humaniora*, 5(3), 3792–3803. <https://jurnal.ardenjaya.com/index.php/ajsh/article/view/1784>
- Qomarrullah, R., Suratni, L., Wulandari, S., & Sawir, M. (2025). Dampak jangka panjang Program Makan Bergizi Gratis terhadap kesehatan dan keberlanjutan pendidikan. *Indonesian Journal of Intellectual Publication*, 5(2), 130–137. <https://journal.intelekmadani.org/index.php/ijipublication/article/view/660>
- Risda, Hamidah, Laili, R., Zikri, Q., Suriansyah, A., & Maimunah, M. (2025). Persepsi guru dan siswa terhadap pelaksanaan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis dalam meningkatkan kehadiran siswa. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(4), 1–12. <https://journal.unpas.ac.id/index.php/pendas/article/view/36250>