Journal of Knowledge Management
Program Studi Manajemen
Fakultas Ekonomi, Universitas Garut
ISSN 2964-5522

Analysis of Student Perceptions in Bandung toward the MBG Priority Program

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Abstract

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is a government policy aimed at improving nutritional status, reducing stunting, and enhancing human resource quality in Indonesia. This study analyzes MBG implementation in Jambi City and identifies its main obstacles. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations at eight schools and the Nutritional Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG), and document analysis. Data were analyzed using Merilee S. Grindle's (1980) policy implementation framework, focusing on policy content and implementation context. The findings reveal dynamic implementation involving multiple stakeholders, with generally adequate compliance and responsiveness. However, four major challenges emerged: incomplete regulatory frameworks, budget constraints affecting meal quality, distribution delays, and inadequate monitoring and quality control. These challenges have occasionally resulted in food being unfit for consumption. The study concludes that effective implementation requires stronger regulations, adequate funding, improved distribution systems, and more accountable monitoring mechanisms.

Keywords: policy implementation, Free Nutritious Meal Program, public policy, Jambi City.

1 Introduction

The MBG program, one of the government programs now, is a priority in order to achieve the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045 and the mission of strengthening human resource development.1 One of the

objectives of the MBG Program is to emphasize the number of malnutrition and stunting, especially in vulnerable age groups by fulfilling the daily nutritional intake of the community. The burden of malnutrition includes three things, namely malnutrition, overweight, and micronutrient deficiency. While stunting is the growth of the body that is hindered by the effect of not fulfilling the nutrients needed by the body for a long period of time, which makes their physical growth, less compared to their age which is sometimes followed by cognitive development that is also late.

Based on the regulations (Perpres No 83/2024) regarding the National Nutrition Agency, the government established BGN as an institution that is directly accountable to the president in carrying out the function of fulfilling national nutrition. This Presidential Decree mandates BGN to coordinate policies, the provision and distribution of nutritious food, the promotion of cross-sector cooperation, to the supervision and evaluation of nutrition programs. The target of nutritional fulfillment according to Article 5 Paragraph 1 includes students.

Food provider kitchens in the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) are required to use local food ingredients that are guaranteed to be safe, healthy, and meet nutritional standards. The portion of the breakfast menu is 20-25% of the daily Nutritional Adequacy Index (AKG) needs and lunch is 30-35% of the daily Nutritional Adequacy Index (AKG) needs. The MBG program is supervised through a national digital system to ensure transparency and accountability.4 Food is distributed through schools, community centers, and local health facilities. The MBG program targets remote, advanced, and outermost areas.

On January 6, 2025, the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) officially began. The Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) recorded a significant initial achievement, which was distributing food to 570,000 students. In just a few months, the number of SPPG reached 1,295 units spread across 38 provinces. However, the national target to reach 82.9 million beneficiaries is still far from being fulfilled. Around 30,000 SPPG is needed for this program to be fully operational nationally, and for that the government estimates the budget to increase from the original Rp 50 trillion to Rp 71 trillion. Sector, to supervision and evaluation of nutrition programs. The target of nutritional fulfillment according to Article 5 Paragraph 1 includes students. Food provider kitchens in the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) are required to use local food ingredients that are guaranteed to be safe, healthy, and meet nutritional standards. The portion of the breakfast menu is 20-25% of the daily Nutritional Adequacy Index (AKG) needs and lunch is 30-35% of the daily Nutritional Adequacy Index (AKG) needs. The MBG program is supervised through a national digital system to ensure transparency and accountability. Food is distributed through schools, community centers, and local health facilities. The MBG program targets remote, advanced, and outermost areas.

The central government conducts multi-party collaboration in accelerating the development and operationalization of SPPG. The implementation of the MBG Program depends on the government's capacity in allocating and managing financial resources effectively. Thus, MBG budget planning must pay attention to local conditions and needs, adjust costs, and support the sustainability of the program across the year. An important step so that the MBG program can run sustainably, it is necessary to strengthen fiscal capabilities, involve local governments, and cooperate with the private sector.

The implementation of the MBG Program has received criticism because there are many cases of poisoning in various regions. The National Nutrition Agency (BGN) noted that as of September 22, 2025, there were 4,711 people who became victims of poisoning. This number is spread in seven regions in Indonesia which has been classified by the body. The poisoning case covers region I Sumatra as many as 1,281 people, region II Java as many as 2,606 people, and region III including Kalimantan, Bali, Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, to Papua as many as 824 people. Meanwhile, different data was found by the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (JPPI). As of September 21, 2025, JPPI recorded the poisoning of the MBG Program in Indonesia reaching 6,452 people.

Several cases of MBG Program poisoning that occurred in various regions have been designated by the government as Extraordinary Events. In Bojonegoro Regency, East Java Province, poisoning cases recorded at the Bojonegoro Health Office were experienced by several high school, junior high school, and elementary school students. One of the prominent cases occurred at SMA Negeri 1 Kedungadem Bojonegoro Regency, where a number of students were reported to experience symptoms of poisoning after consuming food from the MBG Program. This incident had become the public spotlight because of the MBG Program whose purpose is to meet the nutritional needs of students but the food safety has not been guaranteed. The large number of poisonings experienced by students indicates that there is a problem in the implementation of the MBG Program related to food safety standards and nutritional standards that have been set by the government.

Based on the description above, the researcher wrote a thesis with the title of the Problem of the Free Nutritious Eating Program Menu with Nutritional Standards in the Perspective of Law Number 17 of 2023 Concerning Health (Case Study of SMA Negeri 1 Kedungadem Bojonegoro).

2 Literature Review

2.1 Global Growth and the Popularity of MBG

A year running, from January to December 2025, the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) which is one of the National strategic programs has achieved the expected growth. The construction of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) which is the kitchen for the implementation of MBG has been gradually built in 38 provinces throughout Indonesia. This indicates, that the seriousness of the government to improve the quality of Indonesian children is the hope of the development of Indonesia Emas 2045.

The year 2025 is a milestone for the Indonesian nation in the development of superior and quality Human Resources towards an advanced Indonesia in 2045. The government believes and convinces the Indonesian people, that nutrition has a direct role in shaping the quality of human resources. Sufficient nutrition allows Indonesian children to have full potential to learn, concentrate, achieve and contribute to society. This is the output as well as the outcome that the government expects from the MBG national strategic program.

In the operationalization of the MBG program, the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) which was formed through Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2024 issued technical instructions for the MBG program, namely in the form of the Decision of the Head of BGN Number 244 of 2025 regarding the Third Amendment to the Technical Instructions for the Implementation of Government Assistance for the Free Nutritious Meal Program in 2025. This juknis is the third juknis, after the previous juknis with changes that follow the development and basic needs in the field.

The decision of the Head of BGN on October 27, 2025 is a technical guide that will be guided by the government, partners and all stakeholders involved in the MBG program. This Juknis is a guideline in terms of government assistance management, implementation, accountability, monitoring and evaluation as well as government assistance supervision. In addition, this juknis becomes a reference for all stakeholders so that they can quickly achieve the target of the formation of SPPG which is spread across 38 provinces throughout Indonesia.

As it is known that by the order of the President of the Republic of Indonesia in June 2025, the target of beneficiaries of 82.9 million which was originally targeted to be achieved in 2029 was accelerated to be completed in November 2025. To achieve the target of the beneficiaries, it is necessary to establish 32,000 SPPGs, and based on its development until October 2025, the development of SPPG has reached 12,000 SPPGs**.**

3 Research Methods

3.1 Research Approaches

Qualitative research method is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism, used to research on natural object conditions, (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher is a key instrument, sampling of data sources is carried out purposive and snowbaal, collection techniques with trianggulation (combination), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning more than generalization. (Sugiyono:2015: 15). In line with the definition, Sugiyono stated that qualitative research methods emerged because of a paradigm shift in looking at a reality/phenomena/symptoms. In this paradigm, social reality is seen as something holistic, complex, dynamic and full of meaning. Such a paradigm is called the postpositivism paradigm. The previous paradigm is called the positivism paradigm, where it looks at the symptoms more single, static, and concrete. The postpositivism paradigm develops qualitative research methods and the positivism paradigm develops quantitative methods.

Qualitative research method is a research method used to research the natural condition of objects, where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out triatically, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning more than generalization.

3.2 Research Subject

The data source in this study consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained directly through the interview process with respondents, namely active students who have knowledge and understanding of the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG). Students are chosen as respondents because they are considered able to provide relevant information, views, experiences, and responses regarding the implementation and policies of the MBG Program. The diversity of the characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, generation, and educational background, is expected to provide a broader picture of the student's response to the Free Nutritious Eating Program.

Primary data collection is carried out through direct interviews using interview guidelines that have been compiled in accordance with the research objectives. Interviews were conducted systematically to dig up in-depth information about the students' knowledge of the MBG Program, the sources of information they obtained, views on the goals and benefits of the program, responses to the implementation of the program, as well as the hopes and input that can be given for the development of the Free Nutritious Eating Program. During the interview process, the researcher gives the opportunity to each respondent to express their opinions and experiences openly so that the data obtained can describe the true condition.

The interview data was then recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify various views, response patterns, and themes that emerged from the respondent's answers. The results of the interview became the main source in answering the formulation of the problem and achieving the research objectives regarding the response of students to the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG).

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is done through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interview is the main technique used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and obstacles of informants regarding the implementation of the Free Nutritious Eating Program at schools. Interviews are conducted flexibly using open-ended questions that allow the conversation to develop according to the informant's answer. The interview process is not limited by the number of meetings, but adjusted to the data needs until in-depth information is obtained. All interview results are then transcribed verbatimally to become the basis for data analysis.

The research instrument consists of an interview guide based on the 5W+1H principle (what, who, when, where, why, and how), which is then flexibly adjusted to the research needs, especially to dig deeper into the implementation constraints, student admission, and the suitability of the MBG menu with the nutritional fulfillment standards.

Data analysis in this study was carried out together with the data collection process until the data was declared saturated. The analysis process begins with transcribing all interview data verbatim, followed by the coding process to identify the key themes that emerge from the informant's answers. The data is then classified and organized into relevant categories such as: Solutions regarding nutrition, impact on student health, concrete budget of the State Budget, the impact of physical training on the MBG program.

4 Result and Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with 5 students in Bandung, it can be concluded that the perception of the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) tends to be critical. Some respondents admitted that MBG has a good goal to improve public nutrition, especially school children. However, the majority assesses that the implementation of the program is still not optimal so that the benefits are not commensurate with the budget spent. Most respondents argue that mass poisoning cases are more caused by weak supervision than limited budget. In addition, students emphasize the importance of transparency, accountability, and periodic evaluation so that the budget is not abused and the program is really on target.

The majority of respondents also suggested that MBG should be prioritized for the areas that need it the most, not applied evenly throughout the region. They assess that the program should not sacrifice the budget of other sectors that are more urgent, such as education, health, and infrastructure. If the program is proven not to have a significant impact on stunting decline, most respondents stated that the program needs to be thoroughly evaluated, improved, even stopped or diverted to a more effective policy if it does not show results.

Overall, students do not reject the goals of the MBG Program, but assess that the success of the program is highly dependent on the quality of implementation, strict supervision, transparent budget use, and appropriate beneficiary targeting. Here are some responses according to the students:

Handika Aditya (Student, 19 years old)
"I think this program is good for nutrition solutions in Indonesia but no matter how good the program is with poor budget governance will lose the trust of the public, especially with the incident of budget corruption this program that really shook the Indonesian people, so this mbg program is good for nutrition solutions in Indonesia but the budget must be improved or this program will not last long"
"menurut saya program ini bagus untuk solusi gizi di Indonesia tapi program sebagus apapun dengan tata kelola anggarannya yang kurang baik pun akan kehilangan kepercayaan dari masyarakat, apalagi dengan kejadian korupsi anggaran program ini yang sangat mengguncang masyarakat Indonesia, jadi program mbg ini bagus buat solusi gizi di Indonesia tapi anggarannya harus di benahi atau program ini tidak akan bertahanan lama" (Handika Aditya)

Oktaviani (Student, 20 years old)
"In my opinion, the most important thing is transparency and supervision. Anyone involved in this program should continue to work according to their duties and be open to the community. If the management is transparent and well supervised, the public will also have more confidence in the MBG program"

"*Menurut saya, yang paling penting itu transparansi dan pengawasannya. Siapa pun yang terlibat dalam program ini seharusnya tetap bekerja sesuai tugasnya dan terbuka kepada masyarakat. Kalau pengelolaannya transparan dan diawasi dengan baik, masyarakat juga akan lebih percaya terhadap program MBG"*

Muhammad Arya (Lecturer, 26 years old)

"I think both of them are right, mbg does have the potential to be a nutrition solution doing it is like rushing without careful planning that's why there are many problems such as mass poisoning and alleged corruption, so actually it's said to be a total failure or not but it's still not successful gtu still needs a big evaluation especially about the use of funds and who is really prioritized"

"menurut aku keduanya benar sih, mbg emang punya potensi buat jadi solusi gizi tapi ngejalaninnya itu kaya buru-buru gitu tanpa adanya perencanaan yang matang makanya banyak masalah kayak keracunan massal dan dugaan korupsi, jadi sebenarnya sih dibilang gagal total engga tapi juga masih belum berhasil gtu masih butuh evaluasi besar terutama soal pemakaian dana dan siapa yang bener bener diprioritaskan"

Fadlah Waldatussalisah (Student, 19 years old)

"(MBG) program has the potential to act as a stimulus, yet it cannot serve as a sole solution to Indonesia's nutritional issues, which are structural in nature. If the program focuses merely on distributing ready-made meals, it risks becoming nothing more than a short-term populist policy. Malnutrition and stunting in Indonesia are heavily influenced by factors such as sanitation, access to clean water, and parenting education. Without addressing these fundamental sectors, the MBG program will simply become a massive, unsustainable expense. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation regarding budget efficiency and integration with preventive health programs is essential to ensure it does not merely become a political commodity"

"*Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) berpotensi menjadi stimulan, tetapi tidak bisa menjadi solusi tunggal untuk masalah gizi di Indonesia yang bersifat struktural. Jika hanya fokus pada pembagian makanan siap saji, program ini berisiko terjebak menjadi kebijakan populis jangka pendek. Masalah gizi buruk dan stunting di Indonesia sangat dipengaruhi oleh faktor sanitasi, akses air bersih, serta edukasi pola asuh. Tanpa adanya pembenahan pada sektor-sektor mendasar tersebut, MBG hanya akan menjadi pos pengeluaran raksasa yang tidak berkelanjutan. Oleh karena itu, evaluasi besar dari sisi efisiensi anggaran dan integrasi dengan program kesehatan preventif mutlak diperlukan agar tidak sekadar menjadi komoditas politik."*

Mochammad Rafi Hakim (Student, 20 years old)

"Strict Segmentation: Limit beneficiaries only to schools in vulnerable areas (not comprehensive to all independent schools). Private Partnership: Use the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme of food companies to support local needs. Articles of Association Protection: Key to special allocation funds"

"Segmentasi Ketat: Batasi penerima manfaat hanya pada sekolah di daerah rentan (tidak menyeluruh ke semua sekolah mandiri).Kemitraan Swasta: Gunakan skema Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) perusahaan pangan untuk menyokong kebutuhan lokal.Proteksi Anggaran Dasar: Kunci Dana Alokasi Khusus (DAK)" untuk perbaikan fasilitas sekolah dan infrastruktur agar tidak bisa dialihkan (refocusing) untuk MBG.

Informants' Motivation for MBG beneficiaries

The government's commitment in improving the quality and quality of education continues to be a major concern. This was reaffirmed in a meeting between President Prabowo Subianto and the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Abdul Mu'ti at the Merdeka Palace, Jakarta.

In the meeting, the relationship between the strengthening of character education and the implementation of the Free Nutritious Eating (MBG) program was discussed. Minister Abdul Mu'ti explained that the MBG program is in line with the 7 Great Indonesian Children's Habits Movement,

especially in the aspect of healthy and nutritious eating habits that are part of the formation of student character.

The implementation of the MBG program is said to have reached most of the students in Indonesia. Until June 10, 2026, around 80.7 percent of students have received the benefits of the program. From around 53 million students, more than 43 million have felt the impact, with a note that the data refers to the beneficiary students at school.
This program also received a positive response from the beneficiary students. Most of them hope that the MBG program can continue because they feel the benefits directly in daily learning activities at school.

To support the implementation of the program, the government has also prepared various support modules. The results of the study conducted by a number of institutions, including the Sociology Study Center of the University of Indonesia, show that the MBG program has an impact on increasing learning motivation, student attendance at school, and academic achievement.

With these results, the MBG program is not only seen as a nutritional fulfillment intervention, but also part of the effort to strengthen the character and quality of education. The government places this program as one of the instruments that supports a better learning process in schools.

The Decision-Making Process in Taking Up MBG

Based on the results of interviews with students in Bandung, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents see the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) as having a good goal in improving the quality of community nutrition, especially for school children. However, most of the respondents assessed that this program has not been able to be the main solution in overcoming nutrition and stunting problems in Indonesia. According to them, the cause of stunting is not only related to the availability of food, but also influenced by family economic factors, sanitation, access to clean water, and nutrition education.

In addition, most of the respondents highlighted that various problems that arise, such as mass poisoning cases, are more caused by a weak surveillance system than budget limitations. Respondents assessed that the amount of the allocated budget should be able to guarantee the quality of food ingredients, the cleanliness of the production process, and safe distribution. Therefore, strengthening supervision, implementing food safety standards, and governance transparency are aspects that are considered very important.

From the budget side, the majority of respondents argue that the implementation of MBG must be carried out efficiently so as not to reduce the allocation of funds in other sectors that are equally important, such as education, health, and infrastructure development. Some respondents also proposed that the government improve the funding mechanism, increase operational efficiency, and involve independent supervision to minimize budget irregularities.

Regarding the sustainability of the program, most of the respondents stated that MBG should not be stopped immediately if it has not shown a significant impact on the decline of stunting. They prefer a thorough evaluation, improvement of the implementation system, adjustment of beneficiary targets, and improvement of service quality. However, some other respondents argue that if after evaluating the program is still ineffective, then the government needs to consider changing or even replacing the policy with a more targeted program.

Overall, the perception of students shows that they support the goals of the MBG Program, but want the implementation to be carried out in a more professional, transparent, accountable, and sustainable

evaluation-based manner so that the benefits of the program are truly felt by the community and proportional to the amount of budget spent.

5 Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the Free Nutritious Eating Program (MBG) is seen as a policy that has a positive goal to improve the nutritional status of the community, especially students, as well as support efforts to reduce the number of stunting and improve the quality of Indonesian human resources. However, the results of interviews with students in Bandung show that the success of the program is not only determined by policy goals, but also by the quality of its implementation.

The majority of respondents assessed that MBG has not been able to be the main solution to nutrition and stunting problems because these problems are also influenced by other factors, such as family economic conditions, sanitation, access to clean water, and nutrition education. In addition, various obstacles in implementation, such as alleged budget abuse, food poisoning cases, and weak supervision systems, are considered to reduce the effectiveness and public trust in the program.

Respondents also argue that the implementation of MBG must be supported by transparent budget governance, strict supervision, safe food distribution, and setting more appropriate beneficiary targets, especially for areas that really need it. This program should continue to be evaluated periodically so that its implementation is more effective and does not reduce budget allocation in other important sectors, such as education, health, and infrastructure.

Overall, this study shows that students support the goals of the MBG Program, but emphasize that the success of the program can only be achieved if the government is able to strengthen transparency, accountability, supervision, budget efficiency, and conduct continuous evaluations of its implementation. Thus, the MBG Program is not only a populist policy, but is really able to provide real benefits in improving the quality of nutrition and the welfare of the Indonesian people.

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