Jurnal Ilmiah Mandala Education (JIME)
Vol 12 No.3 Agustus 2026
p-ISSN : 2442-9511, e-2656-5862
DOI: *10.58258/jime.v12i3.11219/http://ejournal.mandalanursa.org/index.php/JIME*

Analysis Of The Free Nutritional Food Program (MBG) Policy On Students' Learning Motivation At Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten

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Article Info

Article history:
Accepted: 30 July 2026
Publish: 07 Agustus 2026

Keywords:
MBG Policy,
Learning Motivation,
Supporting and Inhibiting Factors.
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Abstract

This research is motivated by the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) as a government policy aimed at fulfilling children's nutritional needs while supporting the improvement of educational quality. The study aims to analyze the impact of MBG policy on learning motivation and describe the supporting and inhibiting factors of its implementation at TK Ishlahul Ummaah. The research was conducted from May 25 to June 20, 2026, using qualitative method with phenomenological approach. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Research subjects included the principal, teachers, parents, and SPPG officers. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model with validity testing through source and method triangulation.The findings reveal that the MBG program has a significant positive impact on learning motivation including: increased enthusiasm for attending school with attendance rates rising from 50% to 85-90%, enhanced concentration and focus (85% of students showed high concentration), increased activeness and participation (80% of students actively participated), instillation of character values and discipline, as well as reduced parental burden and improved family welfare. Supporting factors include full school support, student enthusiasm, parental support, clear procedures, and adequate infrastructure. Inhibiting factors include limited menu quality and variety, distribution constraints, limited human resources, absence of structured evaluation system, and concerns about program sustainability. This research recommends increased menu variety, improved distribution systems, teacher training, development of structured evaluation systems, and government guarantees for program sustainability. The main contribution of this study lies in offering an in-depth qualitative account of the psychological and behavioral mechanisms, namely Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Deci and Ryan's intrinsic-extrinsic motivation theory, and Pavlovian conditioning, through which the MBG program shapes early childhood learning motivation in a remote, rural school context that has been underexplored in prior MBG research, which has predominantly focused on elementary and secondary school settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the first foundation in building a superior generation, where children aged 4-6 years are in the golden age *(golden age), a* once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. During this critical phase, every stimulation provided will shape the architecture of a child's brain, determining the quality of their physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development in the future (Desmariani, 2025). However, a great irony arises when we realize that this golden potential is threatened by the nutritional crisis affecting school-age children. While

their bodies and brains require optimal nutritional intake to grow and develop, alarming facts show that our children's consumption patterns are increasingly far from balanced nutritional standards.

*The p*henomenon of the double burden of malnutrition: the global health crisis, including Indonesia, is a wake-up call that can no longer be ignored (Maulidah et al., 2025). Malnutrition still plagues some children, while the surge in consumption of ultra-processed foods high in sugar, salt, and fat, and low consumption of vegetables and fruit, threatens our generation with obesity and various degenerative diseases from an early age (Khazrai et al., 2025). Educational institutions are the most strategic platform for instilling healthy habits because children spend most of their time at school. This makes them an effective platform for monitoring children's nutritional needs (Amalia et al., 2022). However, the reality on the ground shows that not all families have the ability to provide nutritious food.

The Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) policy, initiated by the Indonesian government through Presidential Regulation Number 83 of 2024 concerning the National Nutrition Agency, is a solution to this problem. This program is not simply about providing food, but about building civilization through inclusive and sustainable education (Satriawan, 2025). Energy and essential nutrient intake are positively correlated with improved concentration, memory, and cognitive abilities in students during the learning process (Albaburrahim, 2025). Various studies have confirmed this impact. Tyas (2025) at Darussalam Kindergarten found that MBG had a positive impact on increasing focus and attendance. Syafiqoh (2025) also found that MBG eased the economic burden on parents, although it presented time management challenges for teachers. Broadly speaking, Wahyuningsih (2025) stated that MBG can increase learning motivation in three main aspects: enthusiasm for attending school, learning focus, and activeness.

Learning motivation itself is a drive or driving force from within and outside the student to achieve learning goals (Arianti, 2021). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, fulfilling basic physiological needs (such as food) is an absolute prerequisite before a child can achieve success.Motivation to learn and achieve. In addition, Pavlov's theory regarding behaviorism and Deci & Ryan's (1985) intrinsic/extrinsic motivation theory positions feeding programs as a powerful external stimulus for shaping conducive learning behavior in schools.

At Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten, Cupek Hamlet, North Lombok, the MBG program has been implemented, but there has been no systematic study on the extent of its impact on early childhood learning motivation, as well as what the supporting and inhibiting factors are. Based on initial observations, the attendance rate before the MBG was only around 50%, and students often complained of hunger, which resulted in low concentration. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) Analyze the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program policy on student learning motivation at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten; (2) Describe the supporting and inhibiting factors of the MBG program policy at the school.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research methods are based on post-positivism philosophy and are used to examine the natural conditions of objects. The phenomenological approach was chosen to describe and explain in-depth phenomena regarding the subjects' experiences in implementing the MBG program policy on student learning motivation in schools.

The research was conducted from May 25 to June 20, 2026, located at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten, Cupek Hamlet, Sigar Penjalin Village, Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency. The research subjects (key informants) were determined using a purposive sampling technique consisting of the principal (Mrs. Jumiawati), Class Teacher (Mrs. Niswatun Hasanah, S.Pd), Parent (Mrs. Fatlatul Jannah), and SPPG Officer (Mr. Saeful).

The data collection techniques used include: (1) Participatory observation, to directly observe the MBG implementation process and behavioral responses and student learning motivation in class; (2) In-depth interviews using structured interview guide instruments for all

relevant respondents; and (3) Documentation Study, which collects secondary data in the form of school profiles, attendance data, student portfolio records, MBG guidelines, and photo/video documentation of the MBG program implementation.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three main stages: Data Condensation, Data Display, and Drawing and Verifying Conclusions. In the Data Condensation stage, interview transcripts and observation field notes were read repeatedly and open-coded to identify recurring words, phrases, and concepts related to learning motivation and program implementation; these initial codes were then grouped into broader categories, such as attendance enthusiasm, concentration, participation, character values, and supporting and inhibiting factors. In the Data Display stage, the coded categories were organized into thematic matrices and narrative summaries to visualize patterns and relationships across informants and data sources. In the Drawing and Verifying Conclusions stage, preliminary interpretations were cross-checked against the documentation data, such as attendance records and student portfolios, and verified through member checking, in which key findings were confirmed back to the principal and class teacher to ensure that the researchers' interpretations accurately reflected the informants' intended meanings. To ensure the validity of the data andTo avoid bias, researchers use credibility tests through triangulation techniques (source triangulation, technical triangulation, and time triangulation).

3. RESULTS

A. Research result

1. The Impact of the MBG Program Policy on Student Learning Motivation

Based on data triangulation from observations, interviews, and documentation, researchers identified that the implementation of the MBG Program at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten has significantly changed the landscape of students' learning motivation. These impacts are interrelated and demonstrate the MBG program's holistic influence. The following details the findings:

a) **Increased Enthusiasm for Coming to School:** Before the MBG program, student attendance was only around 50% each week, with many students absent on Fridays. After the MBG program was implemented in August 2025, attendance rates jumped dramatically to 85-90%. The principal, Mrs. Jumiawati, confirmed, "Before the MBG program, they were reluctant to come to school, sometimes only coming in two or three times a week... Now the children come with smiles and enthusiasm. They enthusiastically ask, 'Mom, what's for dinner today?'"

b) **Improved Concentration and Focus on Learning:** Morning nutrition has been shown to improve children's cognitive abilities. Observations show that students who receive MBG are more alert and less sleepy. The class teacher (Mrs. Niswatun) said, "In the past, the children often looked weak, sleepy, and had difficulty focusing... after having MBG breakfast, they feel more refreshed and enthusiastic about their lessons."

c) **Increased Activeness and Participation:** Students who have had breakfast tend to be more active participants, ask questions, and follow instructions. The play-while-learning approach becomes livelier and more dynamic. Student portfolios also show increased creativity in completing assignments.

d) **Instilling Character Values and Discipline:** Teachers integrate MBG with character education. Students are taught to wash their hands, queue, pray before and after meals, and respect food (not throwing it away).

e) **Reducing the Economic Burden on Parents:** Indirectly, parents feel their family's well-being has improved because they no longer need to set aside a daily budget for their children's lunches or pocket money. A parent (Mrs. Fatlatul Jannah) gave this program a 10/10 rating, saying it's been very helpful and eliminates the need to force her child to wake up early.

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for MBG Implementation

During its implementation, this program is influenced by both internal and external school dynamics. The following are supporting and inhibiting factors:

Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
1. **Full School Support:** The principal and teachers proactively arrange the schedule so that MBG is integrated without disrupting the core material. 2. **Student Enthusiasm:** The children's enjoyment in welcoming food stimulates the social environment of the class to be more positive. 3. **Parental Support:** Parents are very cooperative and encourage their children to come from home. 4. **Clarity of Procedure:** The SOP for distributing food is carried out routinely every morning in the outdoor area/classroom corridor. 5. **Availability of Facilities:** The school area is spacious, and there are adequate hand-washing facilities available.	1. **Menu Quality & Variety:** The menu is often monotonous, with vegetables that children don't like, and fruit that sometimes comes in less than fresh condition. 2. **Distribution Constraints:** The remote location of the school causes delays in the arrival of food from the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG), and the food is no longer warm. 3. **Human resource limitations:** Teachers do not have specific training on how to integrate nutrition with the PAUD curriculum, thus increasing the managerial burden on teachers. 4. **Lack of Systematic Evaluation:** Schools do not yet have standard instruments to measure the impact of MBG administratively. 5. **Sustainability Concerns:** Anxiety from parents and teachers if the government's MBG program is discontinued in the future.

B. Discussion

The research results show that the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) policy has had a massive and empirical positive impact on learning motivation at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten. This finding confirms previous literature, such as research by Tambunan (2025) and Mustiani et al. (2025), which emphasized that meeting basic nutritional needs is a key catalyst for student learning productivity.

Theoretically, the success of MBG at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten can be explained through three main educational psychology frameworks. **First** Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory. Maslow postulated that physiological needs (food and drink) are at the base of the pyramid. A hungry child will be unable to think about fulfilling the need for knowledge or self-actualization.

With MBG, these physiological deficits are addressed, leaving children cognitively "ready" to receive educational stimulation. This is evident in the absence of students complaining of hunger or drowsiness in class.

Second, the motivation theory of Deci and Ryan (1985). Initially, MBG acted as an extrinsic motivator (external encouragement in the form of free food). However, over time and with the conditioning of teachers who created a pleasant breakfast atmosphere (singing, praying, sharing), this encouragement transformed into intrinsic motivation. Children came to school not solely for the food, but because they felt comfortable, fit, and positively connected to their social environment.

Third, approach *Behaviorist* (Pavlov, 1927). MBG activities become a pleasant unconditioned stimulus. When this stimulus is consistently combined with learning activities and school routines, children produce conditioned responses in the form of high participation, discipline (queuing, washing hands), and a drastic decrease in student absence rates. This implementation has been quite successful thanks to the support of *stakeholder* schools (Edwards

III in policy implementation), although hampered by the supply chain (quality of materials and timeliness of SPPG) and teacher workloads that are not supported by specific technical training (Abdy et al., 2025; Rahmah et al., 2025).

Beyond the specific case of Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten, the challenges identified in this study likely vary in intensity across different school contexts. In remote and geographically isolated schools similar to the research site, distribution delays and compromised food quality are expected to be more pronounced due to longer transportation distances and limited road infrastructure, whereas urban schools closer to SPPG distribution points may experience fewer logistical constraints but could face different challenges, such as larger student populations requiring more complex distribution logistics or higher expectations regarding menu variety. Similarly, the human resource limitations observed here, namely teachers lacking specific training to integrate nutrition education with the PAUD curriculum, may be less severe in schools with greater access to professional development programs or partnerships with local health and education agencies. These contextual variations suggest that while the core psychological mechanisms underlying MBG's positive impact on learning motivation, namely Maslow's hierarchy of needs, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, and behaviorist conditioning, are likely to generalize across early childhood settings, the specific configuration of supporting and inhibiting factors is context-dependent and requires school-specific adaptation strategies rather than a uniform implementation approach.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at Ishlahul Ummaah Kindergarten in the 2025/2026 academic year has had a very positive impact on boosting students' learning motivation. This policy effectively increases student attendance enthusiasm, optimizes focus and active participation during learning activities, and serves as a strategic medium for instilling character values (discipline, gratitude, empathy) from an early age. Furthermore, this program also contributes directly to alleviating the economic burden on families. The success of this program is supported by the full commitment of the school institution, the enthusiasm of the beneficiaries (students), the support of parents, and the readiness of basic hygiene facilities. However, its long-term effectiveness is still hampered by operational challenges such as monotonous menu variations, delays in distribution from SPPG, the workload of teachers who double as meal facilitators without curriculum integration training, and the absence of a standardized nutritional and academic evaluation system at the school level.

5. SUGGESTION

1. For policymakers (Government/BGN/SPPG): It is necessary to evaluate the distribution logistics system so that food is served on time and at optimal temperatures. In addition, menu variations and *quality control of* raw materials (such as fruit freshness) must be tightened.
2. For School Principals: It is recommended to develop internal evaluation instruments (portfolios/checklists) to monitor the correlation between children's anthropometry and their level of academic activity.
3. For Teachers: Follow technical guidance on nutritional literacy so that the integration of MBG-based learning is not just a routine, but an integral part of the intra-curricular curriculum.
4. For Further Researchers: It is hoped that further research will be conducted using a quantitative approach or macro-scale research across districts to measure the linear regression of the impact of MBG on learning outcomes. Comprehensive early childhood.

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