
School strategies in managing the free nutritional meal program as an effort to improve student discipline and achievement

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Abstract

The free nutritious meal program is one of the government's initiatives to enhance educational quality by ensuring students' nutritional needs are met. This study aims to analyze school strategies in managing the free nutritious meal program as an effort to improve students' discipline and academic achievement. The research employs a literature review method by examining six scholarly articles related to the implementation and impact of nutritious meal programs in schools. The findings reveal that the active involvement of schools in planning, organizing, and evaluating the program plays a vital role in its success. Properly managed programs have shown positive effects on students' attendance, discipline, and learning motivation by providing sufficient nutritional support. Therefore, effective management strategies at the school level are crucial to fostering a healthy, productive, and sustainable learning environment.

Keywords

School Strategy, Student Management, Free Nutritious Meal, Discipline, Academic Achievement.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar in the development of high-quality human resources. Throughout the educational process, numerous external factors influence students' learning outcomes, one of which is the adequacy of daily nutritional intake (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016). Healthy and nutritious food consumption has been proven to play a crucial role in enhancing students' concentration, stamina, and cognitive development, particularly at the primary education level (Rahayu, 2021).

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) is one of the flagship policies initiated by the administration of President Prabowo Subianto. This program aims to address nutritional issues and improve the quality of Indonesia's human resources, especially among children and pregnant women. Since its initial announcement, the implementation plan of this program has undergone several developments (Merlinda & Yusuf, 2025). Along with the increasing governmental attention to nutrition and education issues, various schools have begun to actively participate in implementing the free nutritious meal program. This program is not only viewed as a form of public policy intervention but also as an effective instrument for student management at the school level. The success of the free nutritious meal program is largely determined by schools' strategies in planning, implementing, and evaluating its execution.

Within the context of student management, school strategies play a vital role in ensuring that all activities related to students' well-being are conducted in a structured and sustainable manner. Through careful planning and the involvement of all stakeholders, the nutritious meal program can serve as a means to improve student attendance, learning motivation, and discipline at school. Previous studies indicate that adequate nutrition in the school environment is closely associated with improved concentration and academic achievement among students (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2016; Kristjansson et al., 2016). However, most existing studies tend to focus on government policies at the macro level, with limited discussion on the roles and strategies of schools in managing such programs at the operational level. This gap constitutes the research problem addressed in the present study.

This study aims to analyze school strategies in managing the free nutritious meal program as an effort to enhance students' discipline and academic achievement. Using a literature review method, this study examines relevant scholarly articles to identify best practices, challenges, and effective strategies that can be adopted by schools to implement the free nutritious meal program sustainably.

Methodology

This study employs a literature review method. A literature review is a research method that involves the identification, evaluation, and interpretation of all relevant research findings related to a particular research question, specific topic, or phenomenon of interest (Kitchenham, 2004). This approach constitutes a comprehensive examination and interpretative analysis of the literature related to a specific topic, in which research questions are identified by searching for and analyzing relevant literature using a systematic approach to conduct data analysis through a simplified process.

The articles included in this study are limited to original empirical research articles or research-based publications that report findings derived from actual observations or experiments. These articles are required to contain standard research components, namely an abstract, introduction, methodology, results, and discussion sections.

Article searches were conducted using various academic databases, including Google Scholar and ResearchGate. The simplified analysis process involved summarizing each selected study and conducting a critical review to assess the strengths and limitations of each source. This study also explored relationships among the selected literature and identified recurring themes derived from research findings in accordance with the research questions addressed in the literature review. These themes were subsequently refined by merging similar themes, discussing the robustness of the findings, and assigning appropriate thematic labels. The process concluded with a re-examination of each theme and its interconnections, followed by an evaluation of the extent to which the identified themes adequately address the research questions.

Results

The results of the literature review of six selected articles indicate that the free nutritious meal program implemented in schools has a significant effect on improving students' discipline, attendance, and academic achievement. The role of schools in managing and supervising the implementation of the program emerges as a key factor in determining the successful execution of this policy.

Table 1. *Data analysis matrix of articles included in the literature review*

Author, Title, Journal	Method	Main Findings
Maharani, P. A., Namira, A. R., & Chairunnisa, T. V. (2024). Peran makan siang gratis dalam janji kampanye prabowo gibran dan realisasinya. <i>Journal Of Law And Social Society</i> , 1(1), 1 10.	Qualitative	The free nutritious meal program promotes improvements in social welfare and student attendance; however, effective and consistent implementation requires strong management at the school level.
Aji, W. T. (2025). Makan Bergizi Gratis Prabowo-Gibran: di Era Solusi untuk Rakyat atau Beban Baru?. <i>NAAFI: JURNAL ILMIAH MAHASISWA</i> , 2(2), 300-311.	Descriptive and analytical approach	The free nutritious meal program can reduce stunting and increase school participation; schools play a strategic role in the distribution and supervision of the program's implementation.
Tambunan, K. A. H., Nababan, R., Siagian, R. A., Naiborhu, R., Harianti, S., & Jamaludin, J. Tinjauan Kritis (2025). Tentang Program Makan Bergizi Terhadap Produktivitas Belajar Siswa. <i>Katalis Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Dan Matematika</i> , 2(2), 21-31.	Descriptive qualitative	The program improves students' attendance, motivation, and learning focus, particularly among those from low-income families. Learning discipline is enhanced through structured routines of communal meals at school.
Haikal, A. A., & Anbiya, H. H. (2024, August). Pengaruh Program Makan Siang dan Susu Gratis Prabowo Gibran terhadap	Systematic literature review (SLR)	The impact of the free meal policy is cross-sectoral, including the education sector. Schools play a crucial role in

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Merlinda, A. A., & Yusuf, Y. (2025). Analisis Program Makan Gratis Prabowo Subianto Terhadap Strategi Peningkatan Motivasi Belajar Siswa di Sekolah Tinjauan dari Perspektif Sosiologi Pendidikan. <i>Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development</i> , 7(2), 1364-1373.	Qualitative method	The nutritious meal program contributes to students' character development and discipline, with teacher involvement and effective school management serving as key factors for its successful implementation.
Waluyo, S. D. (2025). Kebijakan Makanan Bergizi Gratis: Tinjauan ekonomi Politik Dalam Kesejahteraan dan Kesehatan Pangan. <i>Dinamika: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Negara</i> , 12(1), 144-151.	Literature review	The program enhances students' well-being and improves household economic efficiency. Its effectiveness depends on coordination between schools and local governments.

The findings from various literature sources indicate that the success of the free nutritious meal program in schools is highly dependent on the management strategies implemented by school authorities. Schools bear significant responsibility for ensuring that the program is implemented effectively, efficiently, and sustainably. Careful planning, strict supervision, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders—such as teachers, parents, and health professionals—are key determinants of the program's success.

Several studies emphasize that communal meal activities at school can foster positive habits among students, including time discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. [Tambunan et al. \(2025\)](#) report that the program enhances student discipline, as students are encouraged to arrive on time to avoid missing scheduled communal meals. In addition, these activities create positive social interactions between students and teachers, thereby strengthening emotional relationships and contributing to a supportive and conducive school climate.

[Aji \(2025\)](#) explains that the provision of nutritious meals at school has a direct impact on students' concentration and learning participation. Students with adequate nutritional status demonstrate improved focus during lessons and achieve higher academic outcomes compared to those who do not receive similar support. The program affects not only physical health but also intrinsic learning motivation, as students feel cared for and supported by the school.

Similar findings are also presented by [Merlinda and Yusuf \(2025\)](#), who highlight the importance of teacher involvement in program management. Teachers serve not only as supervisors of program activities but also as character educators who instill values such as discipline, cleanliness, and responsibility. In this regard, the implementation of the free nutritious meal program can function as a medium for character education that is integrated into daily school activities.

Nevertheless, several studies, including those by [Waluyo \(2025\)](#) and [Karomah et al. \(2024\)](#), identify a number of challenges in implementing the program. These challenges include budget constraints, uneven logistical distribution, and insufficient training for educators in managing school-based nutrition programs. Despite these obstacles, such challenges can be

mitigated when schools adopt transparent, participatory management strategies grounded in regular evaluation.

Overall, the findings of this review demonstrate that the free nutritious meal program is not merely a nutritional fulfillment policy but also a student management strategy that can enhance discipline, attendance, and academic achievement. Schools that implement the program based on principles of collaboration, continuous evaluation, and community involvement are better positioned to create a healthy and productive learning environment.

The role of schools as the primary managers is a decisive factor in determining the success of program implementation. A well-planned and measurable management approach can transform the free nutritious meal program into an effective instrument for character development and holistic improvement in students' learning quality.

Conclusion

Based on the literature analysis conducted, it can be concluded that the approach adopted by schools in managing the free nutritious meal program plays a significant role in fostering student discipline and improving academic performance. The nutritious meal program is not solely intended to fulfill students' nutritional needs, but also serves as an effective student management tool for creating a healthy, orderly, and productive learning environment.

Careful planning, cooperation among school stakeholders, and the active participation of teachers and health personnel constitute the foundation for successful program implementation. Schools that adopt collaborative management systems and conduct regular supervision have been shown to improve student attendance rates, strengthen time discipline, and enhance learning motivation. In addition, communal meal activities generate positive social impacts, such as the development of a culture of togetherness, a sense of responsibility, and social awareness among students.

However, the implementation of this program continues to face several challenges, including limited funding, uneven logistical distribution, and insufficient management training for educators. Therefore, comprehensive, well-defined, and sustainable management strategies are required to ensure that the program can achieve optimal outcomes in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

Accordingly, it is important to emphasize that the provision of free nutritious meals in schools represents an innovative approach to student management that has a direct influence on students' discipline, motivation, and academic achievement. Active school involvement in managing and evaluating the program will significantly affect its sustainability as part of broader efforts to realize a healthy, intelligent, and well-characterized "Golden Generation" of Indonesia.

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