

Nourishing the Nation: The Free Nutritious Meal Policy as an Instrument of Food Security, Educational Equity, and Social Justice in Islamic Educational Management

Hilman Rasyid^{1*}

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung, Indonesia

*Correspondence: hilmanrasyid@uinsgd.ac.id

Article History

Received: February 08, 2026

Revised: April 24, 2026

Accepted: June 18, 2026

Abstract:

This study critically examines the multidimensional implications of the Free Nutritious Meal (Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) policy in Indonesia, situating it at the convergence of food security, educational equity, and social justice within the framework of Islamic educational management. Grounded in a document-based qualitative methodology complemented by a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature published within the past five years, the study advances an integrative policy analysis that transcends conventional single-sector assessments. The findings demonstrate that the MBG policy constitutes a strategic state intervention capable of significantly improving children's access to nutritious food, strengthening educational participation and retention, and reducing structural inequalities through inclusive and equitable benefit distribution. Furthermore, MBG serves as a catalyst for local economic empowerment by engaging smallholder food producers and aligns with principles of sustainable development through the integration of social, economic, and environmental considerations. Viewed through the Islamic educational management lens, MBG resonates with the normative imperative of *maslahah 'ammah* (public welfare), the Quranic mandate to nourish the marginalized (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 177; Q.S. Al-Ma'un: 1–7), and the prophetic tradition of ensuring communal food security as an act of collective responsibility (*fardh kifayah*). In conclusion, MBG represents a transformative, multidimensional public policy that simultaneously addresses nutritional deprivation, educational barriers, and social inequity while advancing the long-term goals of sustainable national development.

Keywords: Free Nutritious Meal (MBG), Educational Equity, Social Justice, Islamic Educational Management, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of nutritional adequacy and educational attainment represents one of the most consequential, yet often underexplored, dimensions of human development policy in developing nations. In Indonesia, persistent nutritional vulnerabilities among school-age children continue to undermine cognitive development, academic engagement, and the long-term quality of the national human capital stock. These conditions are not merely biomedical in nature; they are deeply embedded in structural inequalities that characterize the distribution of resources across geographic, economic, and social strata (Vargas Amézquita et al., 2025).

From the perspective of Islamic educational management, the imperative to ensure child welfare and access to education is unequivocal. The Holy Quran in Surah Al-Ma'un (107: 1-7) explicitly censures those who neglect the needs of the poor and the orphan, framing such neglect as a form of denying religion itself. Correspondingly, the prophetic tradition articulates that *"the one who sleeps with a full stomach while his neighbor goes hungry is not among us"* (H.R. Bukhari), underscoring the collective responsibility of Muslim communities and, by extension, Muslim-majority states to ensure equitable access to basic sustenance. Within this normative framework, state-sponsored nutritional programs for schoolchildren are not merely welfare interventions; they are expressions of institutional moral accountability.

Nutritional disparities in Indonesia are exacerbated by multidimensional inequalities between western and eastern regions, between urban and rural communities, and between households across different economic tiers. These disparities produce differential access to nutritious food and, consequently, differential educational outcomes, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion (Siti Fatimah et al., 2025). The severity of this situation is substantiated by national-level data: the 2023 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (Survei Status Gizi Indonesia/SSGI) conducted by the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes) recorded a national stunting prevalence of 21.5%, with rates in eastern provinces such as Nusa Tenggara Timur reaching as high as 35.3% — among the highest in Southeast Asia. The Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) further reported that as of 2024, approximately 9.36% of the Indonesian population remained below the national poverty line, disproportionately concentrated in rural eastern Indonesia where food access is structurally most constrained. Bappenas (2024) noted that these nutritional deficiencies are a significant contributor to an annual GDP loss of approximately 2–3%, underscoring the macroeconomic imperative of addressing child undernutrition as a developmental priority. Such structural injustice violates the foundational principle of 'adl (justice) in Islamic political philosophy, which demands that the state actively intervene to correct imbalances in the distribution of essential resources (Justicia Salsabila & Wahyudi, 2025).

The Free Nutritious Meal (Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) policy, launched as a flagship social investment initiative of the Indonesian government, represents a substantive attempt to operationalize the state's constitutional and moral obligations toward its most vulnerable citizens. By providing free, nutritionally standardized daily meals to school-age children, MBG is designed not merely as a food provision scheme but as a comprehensive cross-sectoral intervention addressing nutritional, educational, and social equity objectives simultaneously (Agustini, 2025).

The scholarly literature on school feeding programs has predominantly adopted sectoral lenses, examining either health outcomes or educational performance in isolation, without adequately integrating dimensions of food security, social justice, and, particularly within the Indonesian Muslim-majority context, Islamic normative frameworks (Locke et al., 2025). This analytical

fragmentation limits the capacity of policymakers, educators, and community leaders to understand the full transformative potential of programs such as MBG. The present study addresses this gap by advancing an integrative, multidimensional policy analysis that draws on food security theory, educational equity scholarship, social justice frameworks, and Islamic educational management principles.

Accordingly, this study contributes a novel conceptual and empirical synthesis to the literature by positioning MBG as a vehicle for the simultaneous realization of *maslahah 'ammah* (public welfare), *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life and health), and *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect)—three of the five essential objectives of Islamic jurisprudence (*maqasid al-shariah*)—alongside its instrumental role in advancing food security, educational equity, and social cohesion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a document-based qualitative research design, utilizing a descriptive-analytical approach structured around policy analysis as its primary methodological framework. This design is particularly suited to the study's objectives, given that the inquiry centers on examining the substantive content, directional orientation, and cross-sectoral implications of the MBG policy rather than on the collection of primary field data (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Primary data sources encompass official governmental policy documents, including legislative instruments, program operational guidelines, and formal policy communications relating to MBG. Secondary data were derived from a systematic review of peer-reviewed scholarly articles published within the past five years in indexed academic journals, as well as reports from credible national and international development institutions. Data were analyzed through content analysis integrated with a tripartite policy analysis framework, examining the MBG policy across three analytically distinct yet interrelated dimensions: food security, educational equity, and social justice. This framework was further enriched by the application of Islamic educational management principles, specifically the *maqasid al-shariah* paradigm, to situate the analysis within the normative-ethical tradition of Islamic public policy thought.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The MBG Policy through the Lens of Food Security

MBG as a Strategic Mechanism for Ensuring Nutritional Access

Food security, as conceptualized in contemporary policy literature, transcends the mere physical availability of food to encompass the equitable, stable, and dignified access of all population segments to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate dietary resources. Within this framework, the MBG policy constitutes a targeted public intervention designed to operationalize the food access dimension of food security for one of its most vulnerable cohorts: school-age children from low-income households (Suprpto et al., 2025).

Globally, school-based feeding programs have been empirically validated as effective instruments for reducing child food insecurity by ensuring the daily provision of nutritionally adequate meals that conform to established dietary guidelines (Bandoni et al., 2024). The systematic integration of MBG within school environments guarantees a minimum threshold of nutritional intake for participating children, directly addressing micronutrient deficiencies and caloric inadequacies that might otherwise impair physical growth, immune function, and neurological development (dos Santos et al., 2022).

From an Islamic educational management standpoint, the provision of nutritious food to schoolchildren reflects the principle of *hifz al-nafs*, the preservation of life and bodily integrity, which Islamic jurisprudence identifies as a foundational societal obligation. The Quranic exhortation in Surah Al-Baqarah (2: 177) to extend support to those in need, including children, establishes a normative basis for state-sponsored nutritional programs as acts of institutionalized *ihsan* (benevolence) and collective moral responsibility.

Systemic Effects on Local and National Food Economies

Beyond its immediate nutritional impact, the MBG policy generates substantive downstream effects on local and national food systems. By institutionalizing systematic, large-scale demand for nutritious food products, MBG creates structured market opportunities for smallholder farmers, local cooperatives, and micro-enterprises engaged in the production of vegetables, fruits, legumes, and protein-rich commodities (Suprpto et al., 2025).

The home-grown school feeding (HGSF) modality, in which schools procure ingredients directly from proximate local producers, has been shown to strengthen rural food systems, enhance smallholder income stability, reduce dependence on imported food commodities, and stimulate the diversification of local agricultural production (Deaconu et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, the strategic alignment of MBG procurement with local food systems would not only amplify these economic multiplier effects but also advance the Islamic principle of *iqtisad* (economic moderation and self-sufficiency) by fostering community-based food resilience.

Moreover, MBG can function as a component of broader national food sovereignty strategies, contributing to price stability, supply chain resilience, and the mitigation of vulnerability to external food market shocks, including those induced by climate change or geopolitical disruptions (dos Santos et al., 2022).

Implementation Challenges: Logistics, Sustainability, and Quality Assurance

Despite its considerable policy promise, the MBG program encounters several structural challenges that threaten its effectiveness and sustainability. *First*, logistical complexity remains a formidable constraint, particularly in geographically remote or infrastructure-deficient regions where cold chain facilities, transportation networks, and procurement systems are underdeveloped (Suprpto et al., 2025). Ensuring timely, consistent, and hygienic food delivery to

schools in such environments requires substantial investments in supply chain infrastructure and intergovernmental coordination.

Second, the long-term fiscal sustainability of MBG constitutes a critical governance concern. Over-reliance on centralized government budget allocations without diversified and resilient financing mechanisms – such as public-private partnerships, community co-investment, or international development funding – renders the program susceptible to political and fiscal discontinuities (dos Santos et al., 2022). A stable, multi-stakeholder financing architecture is essential to guarantee program continuity across electoral cycles.

Third, maintaining consistent food quality and nutritional integrity across thousands of school sites demands robust regulatory frameworks, real-time monitoring systems, and transparent accountability mechanisms. Inadequate oversight may result in meals that fail to meet nutritional standards, compromising the very health and developmental objectives the program seeks to advance (Suprpto et al., 2025). From an Islamic governance perspective, this concern resonates with the principle of *amanah* (trustworthiness and fiduciary responsibility), which obliges state actors to exercise diligent stewardship over public resources entrusted to them for the public good.

Educational Implications of the Free Nutritious Meal Policy

Nutritional Adequacy as a Precondition for Cognitive Engagement

The scholarly consensus on the relationship between nutritional status and cognitive performance is both extensive and robust. Adequate macronutrient and micronutrient intake is foundational to the neurological processes that underpin sustained attention, working memory, abstract reasoning, and learning consolidation. Students who experience chronic or acute nutritional insufficiency are disproportionately vulnerable to cognitive fatigue, attentional deficits, and diminished academic motivation—conditions that cumulatively erode educational attainment over time (Zaenudin, 2025; Wall et al., 2022).

Empirical studies conducted across diverse national contexts consistently demonstrate that participation in school feeding programs is associated with improved academic concentration, greater classroom engagement, and measurable enhancements in standardized academic performance (Appiah, 2024). These findings converge with the Islamic educational ideal of *'aql al-sahih*—the sound, nourished intellect—which classical Islamic scholars regarded as the prerequisite for the pursuit of *'ilm* (knowledge). Ibn Sina's medical-philosophical tradition, for instance, explicitly linked bodily health and nutritional balance to the optimal functioning of the rational faculty. In this sense, MBG operationalizes a Quranic value: the duty to cultivate and protect intellectual capacity as a divine trust (*hifz al-'aql*).

Nutritional provision further correlates with improved school attendance. Children who receive reliable, nutritious meals at school exhibit significantly higher attendance rates, as the incentive of food provision reduces the household economic rationale for keeping children home or directing them toward income-

generating activities during school hours (Appiah, 2024). This dynamic is especially consequential for girls from low-income households, for whom school attendance is frequently the first casualty of household economic pressures.

MBG as an Instrument for Inclusive Educational Participation

School feeding programs occupy a well-established position within global educational equity policy frameworks as mechanisms for reducing structural barriers to educational participation, particularly among economically marginalized populations. Evidence from multiple national contexts indicates that free meal programs are positively associated with increased school enrollment rates, reduced dropout frequencies, and improved educational retention across primary and secondary schooling levels (Appiah, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, and extending beyond the cognitive mechanisms discussed above, MBG directly addresses the financial constraints that constrain educational participation among low-income families by effectively subsidizing one of the significant daily household expenditures—food provision for school-age children. By removing this cost barrier, MBG creates positive incentive structures that encourage consistent school attendance, particularly in remote and economically disadvantaged communities. This dimension of the program reflects the Islamic educational imperative of *taysir* (facilitation and accessibility), which demands that institutions of learning and governance remove obstacles that prevent individuals from fulfilling their potential as morally responsible and socially contributing members of the *ummah* (Sari et al., 2025).

Schools as Integrated Centers of Social and Health Services

The implementation of MBG fundamentally reconfigures the institutional role of schools from exclusive sites of academic instruction to holistic community institutions that integrate nutritional support, health promotion, and social welfare functions. Schools that participate systematically in MBG programs become platforms for nutrition education, early identification of growth faltering and micronutrient deficiencies, and the integration of health screening services that might otherwise remain inaccessible to low-income communities (Locke et al., 2025).

This reconceptualization of the school as a comprehensive social institution resonates strongly with the Islamic educational tradition's holistic conception of *tarbiyah*—the formative cultivation of the whole person, encompassing intellectual, physical, moral, and spiritual dimensions. The *madrasah* tradition historically served as a site of integrated community service, connecting scholarly formation with the broader material and spiritual welfare of the surrounding community. MBG revitalizes this tradition within the contemporary institutional landscape, positioning the school as an agent of both human formation and social transformation.

The MBG Policy within the Framework of Social Justice

State Responsibility and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Within the theoretical architecture of social justice, the MBG policy represents a concrete instantiation of the distributive state's obligation to guarantee equitable access to fundamental goods for its most structurally disadvantaged citizens. The right to adequate food is recognized under international human rights law as an indivisible and interdependent right, inextricably linked to the rights to education, health, and dignified living (Pratiwi et al., 2025). State intervention through MBG operationalizes this normative commitment by converting abstract rights into tangible, quotidian material provision for school-age children from low-income households and food-insecure communities.

This dimension of the MBG policy finds a compelling normative parallel in the Islamic concept of *fardh kifayah*—collective societal obligations that, if left unfulfilled, constitute a moral failure attributable to the entire community and, most proximately, to those with the authority and capacity to act. The institution of the Baitul Mal in classical Islamic governance exemplifies this principle: public revenue was systematically redistributed to ensure that no member of the Muslim community went without basic sustenance, shelter, or access to knowledge. Contemporary state-sponsored nutritional programs such as MBG may be understood as institutional expressions of this redistributive logic, adapted to the administrative modalities of the modern nation-state.

Public policy scholarship further affirms that school feeding programs function as components of social safety net architectures designed to interrupt the transmission of poverty across generations by enhancing the nutritional, health, and educational capital of children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Sari et al., 2025; Bandoni et al., 2024). In this regard, MBG transcends its immediate nutritional function to serve as a vehicle of long-term social mobility and structural equality.

Equitable Distribution of Policy Benefits: Universalism and Targeting

A critical dimension of social justice analysis in the context of MBG concerns the equity of benefit distribution across recipient populations. Universal school meal programs, in which all students receive equivalent benefits regardless of household economic status, have been found to be more effective in ensuring inclusive coverage than highly targeted schemes, which are prone to administrative exclusion errors, stigmatization of recipients, and politically motivated eligibility manipulation (Bandoni et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, in practice, the realization of equitable benefit distribution is contingent upon the governance capacity of implementing institutions, the accuracy and completeness of beneficiary data systems, and the preparedness of regional and local administrative infrastructure. Indonesian evidence suggests that regional disparities in institutional capacity produce significant variations in the quality, continuity, and nutritional adequacy of MBG services delivered across

different localities (Agustini, 2025; Jati et al., 2025). Urban-rural and inter-island differentials in implementation quality risk reproduce and potentially deepen the very inequalities the program seeks to remedy.

From an Islamic equity perspective, this concern maps directly onto the principle of *qist*, proportionate and contextually sensitive justice, which demands not only formal equality of provision but substantive equality of outcome. A policy that delivers nutritious meals of equivalent quality to children in Jakarta and children in remote regions of Papua exemplifies *qist*; a policy that provides superior service quality to already advantaged communities while neglecting the marginalized falls short of this standard. Achieving *qist* in MBG implementation, therefore, necessitates affirmative allocation of additional resources, capacity-building support, and monitoring attention to the most underserved localities.

MBG and the Structural Dynamics of Social Inequality

Critical social policy analysis cautions that food provision programs, despite their redistributive intentions, may inadvertently reproduce or even amplify social inequality if their design and implementation are insufficiently attentive to structural power differentials. When regions with stronger fiscal and institutional capacities consistently deliver MBG at higher quality standards than less endowed localities, the program risks reinforcing interregional hierarchies rather than attenuating them (Jati et al., 2025). Similarly, fiscal discontinuities or politically motivated program suspensions disproportionately harm the most vulnerable beneficiaries, who lack alternative resources to compensate for the withdrawal of provision (Nango et al., 2025).

Conversely, when designed and implemented in alignment with principles of distributive justice and substantive equity, MBG has demonstrable potential to interrupt cycles of nutritional and educational disadvantage, improve health outcomes, expand life opportunities, and enhance intergenerational social mobility for children from structurally marginalized communities (Bandoni et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). The Islamic concept of *i'tidal*—maintaining balance and proportionality in social arrangements—provides a normative compass for policy design that is genuinely transformative rather than merely ameliorative.

MBG should therefore be conceptualized not merely as a food redistribution mechanism, but as a structural intervention in the opportunity redistribution architecture of Indonesian society—one that, to achieve its transformative potential, must be integrated with complementary policies in education, health, poverty alleviation, and regional development (Bandoni et al., 2024).

Multidimensional Synthesis: MBG, Maqasid al-Shariah, and Sustainable Development

Convergences among Food Security, Educational Equity, and Social Justice

The analytical decomposition of MBG into its food security, educational, and social justice dimensions reveals not parallel but deeply entangled policy

logics. Food security is not merely a prerequisite for educational engagement; it is simultaneously a marker of social justice, a driver of local economic development, and an expression of the state's capacity to fulfill its citizens' fundamental rights. Educational equity, in turn, is both an outcome of adequate nutritional provision and a mechanism for the transmission of social justice across generations. And social justice, the equitable distribution of life opportunities and essential resources, is simultaneously a condition of, and an aspiration toward, meaningful human development (Suprpto et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025).

This tripartite convergence finds a profound resonance in the Islamic jurisprudential framework of *maqasid al-shariah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law). Specifically, MBG simultaneously serves three of the five essential *maqasid*: *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life, operationalized through nutritional provision); *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect, advanced through enhanced educational engagement); and *hifz al-mal* (preservation of wealth and economic welfare, supported through local economic empowerment via HGSF procurement). The alignment of MBG with these foundational Islamic values is not incidental—it reflects the moral coherence of a public policy genuinely oriented toward human flourishing.

Globally, school feeding programs are increasingly recognized as cross-sectoral instruments for advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Watkins et al., 2024; Assefa, 2025). The convergence between SDG objectives and Islamic *maqasid* perspectives on social welfare is not coincidental: both frameworks ultimately orient policy toward the comprehensive flourishing of human persons in dignified, equitable, and sustainable communities.

MBG as a Multidimensional and Cross-Sectoral Policy

The foregoing analysis confirms that MBG meets the criteria of a genuinely multidimensional public policy: its effects traverse the boundaries of any single ministerial sector and produce substantive impacts in the domains of nutrition, public health, education, social protection, local economic development, and environmental sustainability. From a food security standpoint, MBG directly reduces nutritional deficits and strengthens equitable access to adequate daily nutrition among school-age children (Karomah et al., 2024). From an educational standpoint, it improves attendance, concentration, and the prospect of enhanced academic achievement (Agustini, 2025; Sari et al., 2025). From a social justice standpoint, it provides a tangible, quotidian expression of the state's distributive obligations toward its least advantaged citizens (Pratiwi et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the integration of home-grown school feeding approaches within MBG creates economic value for local farmers and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), generating community-level economic multiplier effects that align with the Islamic principle of *tawazun* (balance and equilibrium in economic and social arrangements) (Wang et al., 2025; Watkins et al., 2024). This

intersectoral integration reflects MBG's potential as a genuinely transformative rather than palliative policy instrument.

Policy Implications for Sustainable National Development

The policy implications of MBG for Indonesia's sustainable development agenda are extensive and consequential across multiple time horizons. In the short term, MBG directly contributes to improved nutritional status, reduced classroom hunger, and enhanced educational engagement among participating children. In the medium term, consistent implementation is expected to reduce school dropout rates, improve standardized academic outcomes, and contribute to the narrowing of educational equity gaps between economic and geographic strata. In the long term, MBG represents an investment in the human capital foundations upon which Indonesia's aspirations for economic competitiveness, social cohesion, and democratic governance ultimately rest (Watkins et al., 2024).

The Islamic educational management tradition's emphasis on the long-term cultivation of the khalifah, the human being as a responsible steward of the earth, finds an institutional expression in policies that invest in the comprehensive development of children. A child who is well-nourished, consistently present in school, equipped with cognitive skills, and socialized into values of justice and solidarity is not merely a future economic asset; they are a member of a moral community capable of fulfilling the divine trust (*amanah*) of stewardship over the social and natural world.

Realizing MBG's transformative potential, however, demands institutional commitments that extend beyond meal provision. These include the establishment of robust, real-time monitoring and evaluation systems; development of fiscally sustainable and diversified financing mechanisms; strengthening of inter-ministerial and multi-level governance coordination; community and civil society engagement in program management; and the integration of MBG within a broader policy ecology that encompasses health services, poverty alleviation, agricultural development, and educational reform (Suprpto et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the Free Nutritious Meal (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*/MBG) policy constitutes a strategically significant, multidimensional public policy instrument with the potential to simultaneously advance food security, educational equity, and social justice in Indonesia. By providing nutritionally standardized daily meals to school-age children, MBG addresses the structural nutritional deficiencies that impair cognitive development and educational engagement, creates enabling conditions for inclusive and equitable participation in formal education, and operationalizes the state's redistributive obligations toward its most vulnerable citizens.

Viewed through the integrative lens of Islamic educational management, MBG embodies the normative imperatives of *hifz al-nafs*, *hifz al-'aql*, and *hifz al-mal*—the preservation of life, intellect, and economic welfare—while

institutionalizing the principles of *'adl*, *qist*, and *maslahah 'ammah* that are foundational to Islamic public policy ethics. The alignment of MBG with both Islamic normative values and global sustainable development frameworks (SDG 2, SDG 4, SDG 10) reflects the moral coherence of a policy genuinely oriented toward comprehensive human flourishing.

Nevertheless, the transformative potential of MBG is contingent upon institutional commitments to equitable implementation, governance transparency, fiscal sustainability, and cross-sectoral integration. Future research should engage with primary empirical data from diverse implementation contexts to assess the differential quality of MBG delivery and to identify the governance conditions most conducive to equitable, high-quality program outcomes across Indonesia's heterogeneous regional landscape.

On the basis of the foregoing analysis, the following concrete policy recommendations are advanced for consideration by relevant policymakers, program administrators, and institutional stakeholders. First, the central government should establish a dedicated, ring-fenced budgetary allocation for MBG that is legally protected from electoral-cycle interruptions, potentially through embedding the program within a multi-year National Food and Nutrition Strategy (Strategi Nasional Pangan dan Gizi) with binding expenditure targets aligned with the commitments of Bappenas' medium-term development planning (RPJMN). Second, to address regional implementation disparities, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Health (Kemenkes) should jointly develop an Equity-Weighted Distribution Protocol that allocates proportionally greater resources—financial, logistical, and supervisory—to regions demonstrating the highest stunting prevalence rates and lowest institutional capacity indices, as measured by the BPS Regional Welfare Index.

Third, the operationalisation of home-grown school feeding (HGSF) modalities should be systematically institutionalised through formal procurement agreements between regional governments (Pemda) and registered smallholder cooperatives, creating stable, multi-year supply arrangements that enhance both food system resilience and smallholder income security. Fourth, a national digital monitoring platform, integrated with the existing national education management information system (Data Pokok Pendidikan/Dapodik), should be developed to enable real-time tracking of nutritional intake, attendance correlations, and food quality compliance at the school level—providing the evidential basis for adaptive program management and accountability reporting to the national legislature (DPR). Fifth, Islamic educational institutions—including madrasahs under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag)—should be prioritised as MBG implementation sites, recognising both their disproportionate representation among underserved communities and their institutional alignment with the normative values underpinning the program's objectives. The operationalisation of these recommendations, grounded in the principles of *maslahah 'ammah*, *qist*, and *tawazun*, would substantially strengthen MBG's

capacity to function as a genuinely transformative instrument of social development rather than a palliative welfare measure.

REFERENCES

- Agustini, U. (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>
- Appiah, K. (2024). Impact of school feeding programs on student attendance and performance in Ghana. *African Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(2), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.47604/ajep.2522>
- Assefa, E. A. (2025). *How do school feeding programs support the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the African Union's 2063 Goals*. Addis Ababa University. ERIC.
- Bandoni, D. H., Ottoni, I. C., Amorim, A. L. B., & Canella, D. S. (2024). It is time: Free meals at schools for all. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 131(8), 1447–1451. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007114523002660>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.)*. Sage.
- Deaconu, A., et al. (2025). Home-grown school feeding and biodiversity: Promoting sustainable local food systems. *Journal of Sustainability*, 1(2), 1–24.
- dos Santos, E. B., Maynard, D. C., Zandonadi, R. P., Raposo, A. R., & Botelho, R. B. A. (2022). Sustainability recommendations and practices in school feeding: A systematic review. *Foods*, 11(2), 176. https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11020176?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
- Jati, A. K., Azhar, A., & Iriani, A. (2025). Formulasi kebijakan pemerintah tentang program makan bergizi gratis di Indonesia. *Ranah Research: Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 8(1), 1906. <https://doi.org/10.38035/rrj.v8i1.1906>
- Justicia Salsabila, N., & Wahyudi, S. T. (2025). Politik hukum kebijakan makan bergizi gratis dalam rangka pemenuhan gizi kepada ibu hamil guna mencegah stunting: Perspektif ketahanan pangan. *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum*, 3(6), 8934–8954.
- Karomah, U., Wahyuni, F. C., & Trisnasari, Y. D. (2024). Program penyelenggaraan makan siang sekolah: Studi literatur tentang dampak kesehatan, hambatan dan tantangan. *Salus Cultura: Jurnal Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan*, 4(1), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.55480/saluscultura.v4i1.188>
- Locke, A., James, M., Jones, H., Davies, R., Williams, F., & Brophy, S. (2025). Impacts of global school feeding programmes on children's health and wellbeing outcomes: A scoping review. *BMJ Open*, 15(10), e093244. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2024-093244>
- Nango, M., Purwoko, B., Hazim, M., & Karwanto, K. (2025). Makan bergizi gratis:

- Strategi kebijakan publik menuju generasi emas Indonesia 2045. *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik*, 25(2), 991. <https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v25i2.991>
- Pratiwi, S. W., Siahaan, P. G., Purba, N. R., Sahriani, S., Saragih, S. E., & Simanjuntak, Y. E. (2025). Implementasi nilai keadilan sosial Pancasila dalam program makan bergizi gratis. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Development Research*, 3(2).
- Sari, N. H., Lionardo, A., Thamrin, M. H., & Putra, R. (2025). Free school meals policy as a learning framework for MBG in Indonesia: A systematic literature review. *Eduvest – Journal of Universal Studies*, 5(10), 12939–12954.
- Siti Fatimah, A., Rasyid, A., Anirwan, A., & Qamal, Q. (2025). Kebijakan makan bergizi gratis di Indonesia Timur: Tantangan, implementasi, dan solusi untuk ketahanan pangan. *Journal of Governance and Policy Innovation*, 4(1), 641.
- Suprpto, F. A., Praditya, E., Dewi, R. M., & Adiyoso, W. (2025). A policy implementation review of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program. *The Journal of Indonesia Sustainable Development Planning*, 6(2), 297–312. <https://doi.org/10.46456/jisdep.v6i2.798>
- Vargas Amézquita, S. L., Saavedra Parra, P. A., Aguas Hernández, K. P., & Tique Villabón, J. E. (2025). Nutritional factors influencing school performance: A review of the literature between 2020–2025. *TPM – Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 32(S5).
- Wall, C., Tolar-Peterson, T., Reeder, N., Roberts, M., Reynolds, A., & Rico Mendez, G. (2022). The impact of school meal programs on educational outcomes in African schoolchildren: A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(6), 3666.
- Wang, L., Chintala, G., Prasetyo, T., & Caban, R. M. (2025). School feeding programs and SDG 2: A global review. *International Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 11(21s), 1688.
- Watkins, K., Fiala, O., Haag, P., & Zubairi, A. (2024). *School feeding and the Sustainable Development Goals: An agenda to combat child hunger, boost education, transform food systems and strengthen equity*. Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
- Zaenudin, D. (2025). Manfaat program pemberian makan bergizi gratis (MBG) terhadap kesehatan dan konsentrasi belajar siswa di SMAN 1 Pebayuran. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9(2), 17297–17301.