



Impact of The Free Nutritious Meal Program on The Transformation of The Learning Environment And Students' Social Interaction

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program on the transformation of the learning environment and students' social interactions at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands. This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. The informants of the study consisted of students as the primary informants; the principal and teachers as the key informants; and parents and educational support staff as the supporting informants. Data collection techniques were conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation, while data analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicated that the implementation of MBG helped establish students' learning readiness, shape the regularity of school activities, and create a more conducive learning atmosphere. The MBG program also had an impact on increasing students' learning focus through enhanced concentration, learning stamina, and student motivation. Furthermore, MBG provided a social impact in the form of increased social interaction, togetherness, and student discipline in school activities. From an economic perspective, this program helped reduce a portion of the students' families' daily consumption expenditures. Consequently, the Free Nutritious Meal Program does not only function as a nutritional fulfillment program but also contributes to the formation of the learning environment, social behavior, and the welfare of the students' families.

Keywords : Free Nutritious Meal Program, Learning Environment, Social Interaction, Learning Focus, Phenomenology

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INTRODUCTION

School feeding programs have evolved as a cross-sectoral strategy that links children's nutritional fulfillment with the agenda of improving learning quality. International synthesis evidence indicates that school meal programs are associated with improvements in child health, as well as social behavior and support within the school environment, which ultimately influence learning readiness. In recent reviews, both universal and targeted school feeding programs have been reported to have a positive impact on children's health outcomes and socio-behavioral aspects. Therefore, school-based nutrition programs are understood not merely as a consumption intervention, but also as a learning ecology intervention that alters students' daily experiences at school (Locke, 2025). This framework emphasizes that nutrition, behavior, and school climate constitute a mutually reinforcing system (Locke, 2025).

At the same time, school health policy literature emphasizes that nutritional

interventions in schools need to be understood as part of integrated "school nutrition action" that encompasses education, environment, and healthy habits. WHO places school nutrition interventions as a strategic domain because schools provide a stable institutional space to shape healthy habits, knowledge, and consumption patterns. At the implementation level, school meal programs have the potential to shift school culture: from passive classrooms prone to fatigue to classrooms that are more ready, focused, and engaged. Thus, discussions on nutritious meals in schools are highly relevant when directed toward the transformation of the learning environment, rather than purely on nutritional indicators. This perspective provides a strong academic foundation for interpreting MBG as a mechanism for socio-pedagogical change in schools (World Health Organization, 2020).

Although various nutritional improvement programs have been implemented, child nutrition issues in Indonesia remain a major challenge as they directly correlate with learning capacity and long-term productivity. The results of the 2024 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) show that the national stunting prevalence stands at 19.8%, indicating that the need for preventative interventions and nutritional improvements remains urgent. This figure signifies that nutritional problems have not been fully resolved and have the potential to impact children's learning readiness, stamina, and concentration. In other words, schools still face the reality of students who arrive to learn with suboptimal nutritional conditions. This disparity reinforces the urgency of affirmative nutrition policies that reach school-aged children through educational institutions (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2025).

At the human development policy level, accelerating stunting reduction remains a strategic target and demands consistent cross-sectoral interventions. UNICEF emphasizes that improving nutritional status is a life-cycle process that requires systemic support, including during the school-age phase and within institutional environments such as schools. In this context, schools should not merely be understood as places for knowledge transfer, but also as social protection spaces that influence children's eating habits, health, and well-being. However, many interventions still stop at the level of fulfilling biological needs without adequately assessing changes in the learning climate and students' social relationships as vital educational outcomes. This gap between nutritional targets and socio-pedagogical transformation is what makes research on MBG highly relevant, especially when examined through its impact on the learning environment and social interaction (UNICEF, 2025).

Empirically, this study was conducted at UPT SDI Kayuangan No. 93 Selayar Islands, located in Massungke Village, Pasimasunggu District, Selayar Islands Regency. This school is situated within an island region context, which geographically features limited access, logistical mobility that depends on maritime transportation, and constraints in educational and health support services. Based on the school's administrative and Dapodik data, the student body consists of 81 active students from grade 1 to grade 6 at UPT SDI Kayuangan during the year of the study, who constitute the target population for the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program.

From a socioeconomic perspective, the background of the students' parents generally reflects the economic conditions of island communities, which largely depend on primary sectors such as fisheries, small-scale agriculture, and other informal occupations. These economic conditions imply variations in the families' capacity to provide adequate nutritional intake for their children. Furthermore, based on data from local healthcare services (Puskesmas/Health Office), some students have been identified as falling into the risk category for nutritional problems, including stunting or other nutritional vulnerabilities. This reality renders the school a strategic arena for education-based nutritional policy interventions. The characteristics of an island region, coupled with food distribution challenges and infrastructural limitations, mean that the implementation of MBG does not only concern the provision of a nutritious menu, but also involves distribution governance, timely service, and policy adaptation to local conditions. These conditions have the potential to influence the students' daily learning rhythm, such as adjustments to activity schedules, classroom dynamics during communal meals, and social interaction patterns throughout the program's execution. Therefore, the implementation of MBG in island schools can be understood as a social intervention within the school environment, rather than merely a nutritional fulfillment program (Kemendikdasmen, 2025).

In addition to logistical aspects, the phenomenon at the research site can also be analyzed through the perspective of the school nutrition environment. UNICEF emphasizes that the school nutrition environment influences children's access to healthy food through consumption habits, peer norms, and food provision practices at school. The introduction of the MBG program has the potential to shift students' consumption patterns from practices highly reliant on individual lunches and snacks to a more standardized and controlled collective consumption. This shift impacts not only nutritional aspects but also classroom social dynamics, such as the cultivation of solidarity during communal meals, sharing practices, and potential social exclusion if the distribution mechanisms are not managed fairly and inclusively (UNICEF, 2025).

Thus, UPT SDI Kayuangan No. 93 Selayar Islands serves as a strategic location to closely observe how the Free Nutritious Meal Program operates within an island region context, and how this nutritional policy contributes to the transformation of the learning environment and students' social interactions. This location provides a rich empirical context for understanding the relationship between public policy, local conditions, and social dynamics within basic education units.

From a regulatory standpoint, the state has established the National Nutrition Agency to fulfill national nutrition through planned and systematic governance. MBG then became an operational form of this agenda, implemented gradually starting January 6, 2025, through a nutritional fulfillment service scheme. However, at the school level, the success of the program is determined not merely by "whether or not food is present," but by how the program transforms (or fails to transform) the learning environment and students' social relations. Herein lies the research problem: program implementation is frequently evaluated through administrative aspects and consumption outputs, whereas its socio-pedagogical impacts (classroom climate, learning engagement, interaction patterns) have not always been deeply explored through case studies. Therefore, the core problem of this study is focused on the process and impact of MBG on the transformation of the learning environment and students' social interactions within an island school context (Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2024; Kementerian Keuangan RI, 2025).

At the operational level, the MBG guidelines emphasize the necessity of implementation references in educational units to ensure the program runs consistently and safely, including regulations for communal meal activities. However, in school practices, potential problems may arise regarding distribution regularity, the readiness of supporting facilities, procedural discipline, and the habituation of healthy eating behaviors in the classroom. These conditions directly implicate the learning environment, as eating activities can alter time allocation, classroom management patterns, and students' focus before and after meals. In the social dimension, food distribution, queuing rules, and communal dining patterns can become arenas for character building (fairness, discipline, empathy), but can also spark friction if governance is insensitive to student dynamics. Accordingly, the problem at the research site is not sufficiently framed as "whether MBG is running," but rather "how MBG shapes or has not yet shaped the transformation of the learning environment and students' social interaction patterns." This focus aligns with the requirements of a qualitative case study that emphasizes process depth and context (Pedoman MBG di Satuan Pendidikan, 2025).

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, which aims to understand social phenomena in depth by revealing the meanings, processes, and experiences of research subjects within their natural context. Qualitative research is not oriented toward numerical measurement but rather toward the interpretation of social reality as experienced by the actors directly involved in it. In an educational context, a qualitative approach is used to explore the dynamics of policy, school practices, and social interactions that cannot be reduced to quantitative variables alone (Creswell & Poth, 2020). Therefore, qualitative research allows the researcher to understand how the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program is interpreted and implemented within the primary school environment.

This qualitative research design was chosen because the study's focus lies in the

implementation process, the transformation of the learning environment, and students' social interactions as phenomena that are contextual and complex. Such phenomena cannot be fully understood through statistical approaches, but rather through the exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and social practices of the school community. Qualitative research provides the space to explore cause-and-effect relationships interpretively, rather than through linear causal mechanisms. Thus, this type of research is appropriate for revealing how MBG functions as a social policy that transforms the school ecosystem in a gradual and meaningful way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research conducted at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program indicates a shift in the dynamics of students' learning activities at school. This program is not only understood as an effort to fulfill the nutritional needs of the students, but it also begins to influence learning readiness, the regularity of school activities, and the classroom learning atmosphere. The experiences of students and teachers demonstrate that the execution of MBG introduces changes to daily learning conditions, particularly regarding the students' physical stability before lessons commence. Furthermore, the regularly conducted communal dining activities also establish a more orderly pattern of school activities compared to before. Field findings show that the presence of MBG has begun to contribute to the creation of a more conducive learning environment that supports the instructional process at school.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and field documentation, the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program implementation within the context of organizing school learning activities can be observed through three main findings, namely: MBG helps establish students' learning readiness before the instructional process begins; the implementation of MBG shapes the regularity of learning activities and school routines; and the implementation of MBG creates a more conducive and comfortable learning atmosphere.

a. MBG Helps Establish Students' Learning Readiness Before the Instructional Process Begins

Based on the results of interviews conducted at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program has begun to bring about changes in students' learning readiness before lessons take place. The majority of students stated that their condition improved when participating in lessons after having a meal together at school. Teachers also noticed changes in the physical condition and readiness of students in the morning, particularly among students who previously often appeared lethargic or lacked enthusiasm while learning. This situation demonstrates that the presence of MBG is not merely understood as an ordinary meal program, but is beginning to be felt as an element that influences daily learning activities. The experiences shared by the informants indicate that students' learning readiness is closely linked to their physical condition and comfort before entering the classroom.

The observations conducted by the researcher reveal that the majority of students appeared more orderly and better prepared to enter the classroom after the communal dining activity was completed. Students no longer frequently entered and exited the classroom to purchase food outside the school, as had commonly occurred previously. Furthermore, the classroom atmosphere appeared calmer at the beginning of the lesson, and students responded more quickly to the teacher's instructions when the learning process commenced.

Synthesis of Research Findings

a. The Implementation of MBG Shapes the Regularity of Learning Activities and School Routines

The implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, does not only affect the students' physical conditions, but it also begins to shape the regularity of learning activities at school. Based on the informants' experiences, the communal dining activity has gradually become a part of the school routine that influences students' patterns of discipline before entering the classroom. Teachers observe that students are becoming accustomed to following the flow of school activities in a

more orderly manner than before. The presence of MBG creates a more structured activity pattern because students have a shared schedule that they must follow before learning takes place. This situation demonstrates that MBG does not only impact food consumption aspects, but also the formation of the students' learning activity rhythm at school.

One of the students explained that prior to the implementation of MBG, several students often arrived late or were still busy buying food when the lesson was about to start. However, after the communal dining activity was put into practice, students began to adapt to arriving earlier and participating in school activities together.

The observations indicate that the communal dining activity takes place within a fairly orderly pattern. The majority of students are seen joining the meal queue in an orderly manner and returning to their classrooms once the activity is completed. The researcher also observed that the school atmosphere in the morning becomes more structured as student activities are centralized around this shared activity before instructions begin.

The implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, also introduces changes to the students' learning atmosphere in the classroom. Based on the interview results, the majority of informants feel that learning conditions have become more comfortable since the program has been running regularly. Students appear calmer during lessons and are no longer significantly distracted by hunger while the learning process is underway. Teachers also feel that the classroom atmosphere is easier to manage because the students' conditions are more stable than before. This situation indicates that MBG does not only affect the physical aspects of the students, but also influences the learning climate within the school environment.

One of the students explained that the learning atmosphere in the classroom has become more comfortable because students are no longer preoccupied with thinking about food during lessons. According to the student, this condition makes it easier for students to follow the teacher's explanations in class.

The observations indicate that the classroom atmosphere after the implementation of MBG tends to be more orderly and comfortable. The majority of students appear to participate in learning in a calmer condition and are responsive to the teacher's instructions. The researcher also observed that the frequency of students entering and exiting the classroom during lessons has begun to decrease compared to before the MBG program was implemented.

1. The Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program Impacted Students' Learning Focus at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands

Based on the results of the research conducted at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program influences students' learning focus during the instructional process at school. The majority of informants revealed that since the program has been running regularly, students appear more capable of maintaining attention while studying, participate more actively in learning, and do not easily lose concentration in class. Teachers also noticed changes in the students' physical conditions and learning enthusiasm, particularly in their ability to follow lessons from the beginning to the end of school hours. Furthermore, communal dining activities prior to instructions help create more stable learning conditions and support student engagement in daily learning activities. Field findings indicate that MBG does not only impact the fulfillment of students' nutritional needs, but also influences the quality of focus, learning stamina, and learning enthusiasm among students at school.

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and field documentation, the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program on students' learning focus can be seen through students' experiences which demonstrate increased learning concentration during lessons, enhanced students' learning stamina and endurance, as well as the growth of students' motivation and learning enthusiasm at school. These conditions show that the presence of MBG has begun to bring about changes in students' daily learning experiences, from both physical and psychological aspects, in participating in the learning process within the school environment.

a. MBG Increases Students' Concentration During the Instructional Process

Based on the results of interviews conducted at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program influences students' concentration during classroom lessons. The majority of students expressed that they felt more focused while studying after participating in the communal dining activity at school. Teachers also observed changes in students' attention levels during the learning process, particularly in their ability to listen to the teacher's explanations and complete assignments in class. This condition indicates that fulfilling students' dietary needs helps create more stable learning conditions compared to before the program was implemented. Students' experiences demonstrate that the hunger which previously often disrupted their learning has begun to lessen since the introduction of MBG.

One of the students explained that they found it easier to understand the lessons after eating at school because they were no longer preoccupied with thoughts of hunger while the teacher was explaining the material.

The observations indicate that the majority of students appear calmer and pay closer attention to the teacher during lessons after the communal dining activity is completed. The researcher also observed that students participate more actively under the teacher's guidance and exhibit fewer instances of drowsy behavior or inattentiveness during class compared to the period before the MBG program was regularly implemented at school.

a. Nutritional Fulfillment Through MBG Helps Enhance Students' Learning Stamina and Endurance

Based on the research findings at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program does not only influence students' learning focus, but also helps enhance their stamina and endurance during the instructional process at school. The majority of students expressed that since the implementation of MBG, they feel physically stronger and do not easily tire when participating in lessons until school hours conclude. This condition was particularly felt by students who previously often felt lethargic, drowsy, or lost their enthusiasm for learning when they had not eaten before leaving for school. Teachers also observed changes in students' physical endurance during lessons, especially regarding their activity levels and readiness to participate in classroom activities from morning until afternoon. This situation demonstrates that fulfilling students' dietary needs has an impact on their ability to maintain energy throughout the learning process.

1. Social and Economic Impacts of the Free Nutritious Meal Program

a. MBG Strengthens Social Interaction and Togetherness Among Students

The results of the study indicate that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, impacts the enhancement of social interaction and togetherness among students within the school environment. The regularly conducted communal dining activities create a social space that brings students together in a more relaxed and open atmosphere compared to when they are inside the classroom. The majority of students expressed that they talk, joke, and interact with their peers more frequently since the introduction of communal dining activities at school. Teachers also noticed changes in students' social relations, particularly regarding the level of familiarity and cooperation among peers in daily school activities. This situation demonstrates that MBG does not only function as a nutritional fulfillment program but also serves as a vehicle for shaping students' social relationships in the school environment.

The findings of this study are relevant to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that an individual's social development is influenced by the immediate environment in which they interact directly (Bronfenbrenner as cited in Rosa & Tudge, 2021). In the context of this study, communal dining activities become part of the school's social environment that expands the space for interaction among students. These collective activities help students build social relationships through daily, routine communication and shared experiences. This situation is evident from the experiences of students who have begun to interact more openly with peers outside their close friendship groups. Thus, the implementation of MBG helps create a school social environment that better supports the cultivation of togetherness among students.

Furthermore, the results of this study are also relevant to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that an individual's social behavior develops through processes of interaction, observation, and social experiences occurring within their daily environment (Bandura as cited in Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2022). In this study, communal dining activities provide students with opportunities to learn to interact, share, and adapt to their peers in real social situations. These experiences gradually shape more open and cooperative social behaviors within the school environment. Teachers also observed that students find it easier to cooperate and engage less frequently in minor conflicts compared to the period before MBG ran routinely. This indicates that the social experiences within MBG activities help shape students' daily social interaction patterns.

The findings of this study are further reinforced by a UNESCO (2022) report, which explains that school health and nutrition programs can help build a more positive social environment through collective activities that engage students together. In addition, an OECD (2023) report also explains that students' well-being and social engagement are closely linked to the quality of learning experiences and interpersonal relationships at school. Collective activities such as communal dining help generate a sense of belonging and strengthen social relationships among learners within the educational environment. This alignment demonstrates that nutrition-based programs do not only impact student health but also contribute to the formation of better social relationships in primary schools.

Nevertheless, this study also found that students' social interactions remain influenced by the proximity of specific friendship groups. Some students admitted that they still feel more comfortable sitting or gathering with their close friends during communal dining activities. This condition indicates that students' social relations do not undergo a complete transformation instantly, but develop gradually according to each student's comfort level and social experiences. Nonetheless, in general, most informants still acknowledge that MBG makes relationships among students more familiar than before. In a phenomenological approach, these experiences show that students interpret communal dining activities as a social experience that helps them feel closer to their school peers.

Overall, the results of this study show that MBG helps strengthen social interaction and togetherness among students in the school environment. Communal dining activities create a social space that makes it easier for students to communicate, cooperate, and build broader friendships. This finding demonstrates that nutrition-based programs have a significant social impact on students' school lives. Therefore, MBG has not only a health function but also a contribution toward forming social relationships and togetherness among primary school students.

b. MBG Shapes Students' Disciplined Behavior and Social Compliance

The results of the study indicate that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, has an impact on the formation of students' disciplined behavior and social compliance in daily school life. Regularly conducted communal dining activities introduce social situations that require students to follow rules, maintain order, and respect the rights of their peers in shared activities. The majority of students have begun to adapt to queuing, waiting for their turn, and complying with the teacher's instructions during the program's execution. Teachers also observed that students become easier to direct and more orderly when participating in collective activities at school compared to before the program was implemented. This situation demonstrates that MBG is not merely about fulfilling students' dietary needs, but also serves as a tool for social learning that helps shape disciplined behavior among students in the school environment.

The findings of this study are relevant to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that an individual's social behavior develops through interactions occurring within their daily environment (Bronfenbrenner as cited in Rosa & Tudge, 2021). In this study, communal dining activities become part of the school's social environment that shapes students' behavioral habits through recurring collective activities. This environment helps students learn to understand shared rules, maintain order, and adjust their behavior to the social situations at school. This situation is reflected in the changes in student behavior, as they have become accustomed to queuing and maintaining order during activities.

Consequently, the implementation of MBG helps create a social environment that supports the formation of disciplined behavior and compliance among students.

Additionally, the results of this study are relevant to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that individual behavior develops through processes of observation, experience, and habituation within the social environment (Bandura as cited in Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2022). In this study, students learn discipline through direct experience during daily communal dining activities. When students observe their peers following queuing rules and complying with the teacher's instructions, they gradually adjust their own behavior to match these customs. This collective experience helps shape social behaviors that are more orderly and easier to direct in daily school activities. Teachers also noted that students have become more accustomed to following shared rules compared to the period before MBG was routinely implemented at school.

The findings of this study are also supported by a UNESCO (2022) report, which states that school health and nutrition programs can help shape positive social behavior through collective activities involving students together. Furthermore, an OECD (2023) report emphasizes that structured school environments that support student well-being influence the formation of disciplined behavior and social order among learners. Routine activities carried out together within the school environment help students understand the importance of rules and social responsibility in daily life. This similarity demonstrates that nutrition-based programs do not only impact student health but also contribute to the formation of more orderly social behavior in primary schools.

However, this study also found that disciplined behavior has not yet been uniformly formed across all students. In certain situations, some students were still found attempting to bypass their peers in the queue or engaging in excessive joking when the activity environment became noisy. This condition shows that the formation of disciplined behavior is a gradual process influenced by the character and habits of each individual student. Nonetheless, in general, the majority of informants still acknowledge that MBG activities make students more accustomed to following shared rules than before. In a phenomenological approach, this experience indicates that students interpret communal dining activities as a social experience that teaches order and compliance in daily school activities.

Overall, the results of this study show that MBG helps shape students' disciplined behavior and social compliance within the school environment. Communal dining activities create social experiences that train students to follow rules, maintain order, and respect the rights of their peers in shared activities. This finding demonstrates that nutrition-based programs have a vital social impact on shaping student behavior in primary schools. Therefore, MBG holds not only a health function but also contributes to building a culture of discipline and social order among students within the school environment.

c. MBG Helps Reduce the Burden of Daily Family Consumption Expenditures for Students

The results of the study show that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, does not only provide social benefits for students but also delivers economic benefits for their families. The majority of parents expressed that the presence of the program helps reduce daily expenditures previously allocated for their children's food needs and pocket money while at school. Before MBG was implemented, some parents still had to prepare additional lunches or provide more pocket money so that their children could purchase food during school hours. However, since the communal dining activities have been routinely applied, these needs have begun to decrease because students receive meals at school. This situation indicates that MBG offers an economic value that is significantly felt by students' families, particularly those with limited economic conditions.

The findings of this study are relevant to Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that the environments of the family and the school are interrelated in influencing the life experiences and development of learners (Bronfenbrenner as cited in Rosa & Tudge, 2021). In the context of this study, MBG does not only affect students' lives within the school environment but also has an impact on the family's economic condition at home. When students' food needs during school hours are fulfilled through the MBG program,

parents feel more assisted in managing daily household expenses. This situation demonstrates that nutrition-based school policies can exert an influence that extends beyond the learning environment, directly reaching the family lives of students. Thus, the implementation of MBG becomes part of the social environment that helps generate economic support for students' families.

Moreover, the results of this study are also relevant to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that an individual's social experience is influenced by the interaction between environment, behavior, and daily experiences (Bandura as cited in Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2022). In this study, the presence of MBG creates a new social experience for students and their families because fulfilling students' food needs at school is no longer entirely the daily responsibility of the family. This situation offers peace of mind to some parents, knowing that their children regularly receive food provided by the school. This positive experience helps shape the community's view that schools are not only places for academic learning but also spaces of social support for students' families. Therefore, MBG does not only shape students' learning experiences but also presents a socio-economic experience directly felt by families.

The findings of this study are also reinforced by a World Food Programme report, which explains that school meal programs have an economic impact on households because they help reduce a portion of the consumption expenditures of the beneficiaries' families (Drake et al., 2021). In addition, a UNESCO (2022) report also asserts that school nutrition programs can help improve family welfare by supporting the basic needs of learners while they are at school. This alignment demonstrates that school meal programs are not merely related to student health and education, but also contribute to family economic stability on a certain scale. In this study, this benefit is visible through the reduced need for pocket money and additional lunches that parents previously had to prepare every day.

Nevertheless, this study also found that the economic impact of MBG has not completely eliminated the burden of school-related needs for students' families. Some parents revealed that they still have to meet other needs, such as transportation costs, school supplies, and the child's daily needs at home. This condition indicates that MBG functions more as a form of assistance that lightens a portion of the students' consumption needs, rather than as a complete solution to all family economic problems. Nonetheless, the majority of parents still admit that the presence of MBG is quite helpful and provides tangible benefits for their children's daily school needs. In a phenomenological approach, this experience shows that the community interprets MBG as a form of social support that provides economic relief while offering peace of mind to the students' parents.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that MBG helps reduce a portion of the burden of daily family consumption expenditures for students at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands. The program helps fulfill students' food needs while at school so that parents are no longer overly burdened by the need for pocket money and additional lunches each day. This finding shows that nutrition-based programs have a meaningful economic impact on the lives of students' families, particularly within communities experiencing economic constraints. Therefore, MBG possesses not only a health and educational function but also carries a socio-economic contribution in supporting the welfare of learners' families.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program at UPT SDI Kayuangan, Selayar Islands, exerts a significant impact on the organization of school learning activities. This program helps enhance students' learning readiness through more stable physical conditions and reduced learning disruptions caused by hunger. Furthermore, the MBG program contributes to establishing regularity in learning activities and school routines through scheduled and more orderly communal dining activities. The implementation of MBG also creates a more conducive and comfortable learning atmosphere, allowing students to be calmer and more prepared to engage in classroom instruction. Consequently, the MBG program functions not only as a nutritional fulfillment initiative for students but also contributes to the formation of a learning environment that is more supportive of the

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