



## Policy and Practice Analysis: Problems of the Management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (FNM) at MI in Haurgelis District

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### Abstract:

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is a program that requires systematic governance so that its implementation can optimally meet the nutritional needs of students. This study aims to analyze policies and practices and identify management problems of the Free Nutritious Meal Program at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgelis District, especially in the aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, adapting menus, supervision, and evaluation. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method, involving 4 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and 24 informants (comprising madrasah heads, teachers, educators, and students) selected purposively. Data was obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation with informants consisting of madrasah heads, teachers/homeroom teachers, educators, and students. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification, with the validity of the data strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results of the study show that the implementation of MBG has involved various elements of madrasahs in the planning, organizing, distribution, supervision, and evaluation processes. However, in practice, specific management problems are still prominent, namely weak cross-role coordination, logistical distribution delays, and a lack of institutionalized feedback regarding student menu preferences. The findings also show that menu adaptation and student involvement in providing feedback are important aspects in increasing food acceptance without ignoring the principles of nutritional adequacy and food safety. Strengthening coordination, supervision and reporting mechanisms, beneficiary involvement, and continuous evaluation are needed to improve the quality of MBG governance at the madrasah level. This study concludes that the effectiveness of MBG governance is profoundly contingent upon adaptive management and the integration of direct beneficiary feedback, rather than merely structural compliance.

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## Introduction (مقدمة)

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is one of the government policies directed to support the fulfillment of students' nutritional needs while building healthy food consumption habits from school age. The implementation of the program is not only related to the provision of food, but also requires systematic governance so that the food provided meets the aspects of nutritional adequacy, food safety, quality, distribution accuracy, and conformity with the characteristics of students (Prameswari & Susanto, 2026). In the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, the implementation of MBG has a more complex dimension because it must pay attention to the characteristics of the child's age, social and cultural conditions of the community, food consumption habits, and the religious education environment (Weyana et al., 2025). Therefore, the success of MBG at the madrasah level is not enough to be seen from the distribution of food to students, but needs to be analyzed through the entire program management process.

In the planning stage, the MBG program requires mapping the needs of students, the number of beneficiaries, the environmental conditions of the madrasah, food consumption patterns, the availability of foodstuffs, and the preparation of menus that meet nutritional needs. Planning that does not consider the real conditions of the madrasah can cause various problems at the implementation stage, such as mismatches in the amount of food, menus that are not in demand by students, distribution delays, and inaccurate food composition (Notha & Sari, 2025). Thus, MBG planning in madrasah ibtidaiyah needs to be carried out in an integrated manner between the program organizer, food provider manager, and the madrasah. The involvement of madrasahs is important because the school has direct knowledge about the number of students, student characteristics, eating habits, and school environmental conditions which can be the basis for determining the needs and strategies for program implementation.

In addition to planning, the organizational aspect is an important part in determining the sustainability of the MBG program in the field. Organizing includes the division of duties, authority, coordination, communication, and responsibilities between food providers, program managers, madrasahs, teachers, and other parties involved. Unclear work structures have the potential to cause overlapping authority and information gaps, especially when there are changes in the number of recipients, distribution constraints, or food quality problems (Qomarullah et al., 2025). In the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, coordination is also needed so that the process of receiving, inspecting, distributing, and consuming food can take place in an orderly manner. Therefore, organization is not only about determining who is responsible, but also building a coordination mechanism that is able to respond to problems quickly and appropriately.

The implementation of MBG in the field is a stage that brings together planning and organization with real conditions in the madrasah. At this stage, various problems can arise that are not completely predictable at the time of planning, such as food delays, changes in food conditions, limited storage facilities, inappropriate number of portions, ineffective distribution, and students' response to the food provided (Lendra et al., 2025). This condition shows that the success of the program is not only determined by the quality of policy design, but also by the ability of the implementer to translate the policy into practice. Madrasah as a beneficiary institution has a strategic position in providing information on the actual conditions of MBG implementation, including various administrative, technical, and social obstacles that occur during the process of food distribution and consumption (Furkan et al., 2025).

One of the issues that needs attention is the adaptation of the menu to the characteristics of students and the local conditions of the madrasah. Menus that normatively meet nutritional standards may not necessarily be well accepted by all students due to differences in taste, eating habits, food culture, allergies, food taboos, and the level of children's acceptance of certain types of food (Salsabil, 2026). If the aspect of student admission is not paid attention to, food has the

potential to not be consumed optimally so that the goal of fulfilling nutrition is not achieved optimally (Widyasari et al., 2025). Therefore, menu adaptation needs to be placed as part of program management, not just a technical issue of food provision. The adaptation needs to maintain the principles of nutritional adequacy and balance, but at the same time consider the local context and the characteristics of the beneficiaries so that the food provided can be received and consumed optimally.

Supervision is an important instrument to ensure that the implementation of MBG runs in accordance with planning, quality standards, and program objectives. Supervision can include the quality of foodstuffs, food hygiene and safety, suitability of portions, timeliness of distribution, food conditions when received, suitability of menus, and the level of acceptance of students (Maulidya & Fitriani, 2025). Supervision that is carried out consistently allows various irregularities or problems to be identified from the beginning so that corrective actions can be taken immediately. In the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, supervision also requires the involvement of the madrasah as a supervisor at the beneficiary level, especially in conveying field findings to program managers (Ariani & Rahim, 2025). Thus, supervision not only serves as a control mechanism, but also as a source of information to improve the quality of MBG implementation in a sustainable manner.

While recent literature has extensively examined the nutritional outcomes, legal frameworks, and broad public health impacts of the MBG program (Prameswari & Susanto, 2026; Salsabil, 2026), there remains a critical research gap regarding its managerial execution at the micro-level. Previous studies have not adequately addressed the unique socio-cultural, administrative, and religious complexities within specific educational institutions. Therefore, this study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge by explicitly analyzing the gaps between the normative MBG policy design and its practical implementation challenges specifically within Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District, offering a localized administrative perspective.

Based on this series of problems. Evaluation needs to be carried out comprehensively on aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, adapting menus, supervision, and students' responses to the food provided. On this basis, This study aims to analyze policies and practices and identify management problems of the Free Nutritious Meal Program at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District, especially in the aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, adapting menus, supervision, and evaluation. This study is expected to provide an empirical picture of the gaps, challenges, and mechanisms of MBG management in madrasah ibtidaiyah and become a consideration for improving program governance at the educational unit level.



## Method (منهج)

### *Research Design*

This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods to analyze the policies and management practices of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District. The design of this research is naturalistic, where the researcher observes the subject in a real context without conducting experimental manipulation. The focus of the research includes planning, organizing, implementation in the field, menu adaptation, supervision, and program evaluation (Jayantika et al., 2025).

### *Participant (Subject) Characteristics*

The informants in this study were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the implementation of MBG. The research participants included: (a) the head of the madrasah as the main policy maker, (b) the teacher involved in the implementation of the program, (c) the

manager or person in charge of the program, and (d) the food provider. The inclusion criteria were to have direct experience and a deep understanding of the management of the Free Nutritious Meal Program. This research was conducted over a three-month period (e.g., June to August 2026) across 4 Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District. A total of 24 key informants (4 madrasah heads, 8 teachers, 4 educators, and 8 students) were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the daily operations of the MBG program

### *Procedures*

The research data was obtained through three data collection methods: participatory observation of the implementation of the program in the field, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and relevant program documentation. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, in which informants were selected based on their direct involvement and strategic position in the management of the MBG. The research instruments included observation guides, semi-structured interview guidelines, and program document analysis. The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and program documents (Nasution, 2023).

### *Data Analysis*

To analyze the data, interview transcripts and observational notes underwent open, axial, and selective coding to systematically transform raw data into the core thematic categories presented in the Results section. Furthermore, rigorous ethical standards were maintained; all adult participants and the guardians of student participants provided informed consent, and institutional anonymity was preserved throughout the report. The analysis is directed to identify three main points: gaps between policies and practices, forms of management problems that arise, and madrasah strategies in overcoming various obstacles to the implementation of MBG.

## **Result (نتائج)**

### **1. Free Nutritious Meal Program Planning**

The results of the study show that the planning of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District involves the madrasah in determining the number of beneficiaries, the time food is received, the distribution mechanism, and the readiness of the venue and personnel on duty. The Head of the Madrasah explained that planning at the educational-unit level "needs to be adjusted to the conditions of students and the situation of the madrasah so that the implementation of the program can run in an orderly manner." To ensure administrative readiness, the madrasah also relies heavily on periodic internal meetings. As the Head of the Madrasah stated, "We hold coordination meetings every Friday to evaluate the data of students attending the following week, ensuring the food provider brings the exact number of portions to avoid waste" (Interview, Head of Madrasah, July 15, 2026). Document analysis of the madrasah's daily agenda (*Agenda Harian*) further confirmed that teacher duty rosters for food distribution were explicitly mapped out at the beginning of each month.

Teachers and homeroom teachers also play an important role by providing information on the number of students, student characteristics, and student conditions related to eating habits, while educators help prepare the technical aspects of receiving and distributing food to students. These findings show that MBG planning is not merely administrative. It is a coordinated process between the madrasah and the program implementer, supported by routine meetings, accurate attendance data, and documented duty schedules, so that students' needs can be accommodated.

## 2. Organizing and Assigning Tasks

In terms of organization, the implementation of MBG requires a clear division of duties between the head of the madrasah, teachers, homeroom teachers, educators, and food providers. The head of the madrasah plays a role in coordinating and ensuring that the program can be implemented according to the provisions, while teachers and homeroom teachers play a role in regulating students when food is received and distributed. Educators assist with technical aspects, such as food receipt, distribution arrangements, and maintaining order for students during activities. Based on the informant's information, coordination is an important factor because the implementation of MBG involves several parties with different tasks. However, in practice, there is still a need to clarify the communication mechanism in the event of changes in the amount of food, delays in distribution, or other technical problems.

## 3. Program Implementation in the Field

The implementation of MBG in madrasas takes place through several stages, ranging from food receipt, food condition checks, distribution to students, to the consumption process. Teachers and homeroom teachers are the parties who face students directly so that they have an important role in ensuring that food is received and consumed in an orderly manner. Educators also help organize the distribution process so that there is no accumulation and all students get food. From the perspective of students, the implementation of the program provides a new experience because they get food directly in the school environment. However, implementation in the field has the potential to face problems such as differences in reception time, food conditions when arriving at the madrasah, and differences in students' responses to the food provided. This condition shows that there is a gap between the design of the program and the dynamics of its implementation at the level of the educational unit.

## 4. Menu Adaptation and Student Admission

Menu adaptation is one of the important findings in the implementation of MBG because each student has different tastes, eating habits, and levels of food acceptance. Teachers and homeroom teachers observe that not all students respond equally to the menu provided. Some students accept and consume the food well, while others show disinterest in certain types of food. Information from students is therefore important for understanding the level of menu acceptance directly, since students are the main beneficiaries of the program. Direct observations support this: certain vegetable-heavy menus consistently had a high leftover rate, at approximately 30-40% unconsumed (observation notes, July 22, 2026). The observational data is corroborated by student testimony. One 5th-grade student mentioned, "Sometimes the vegetables are too hard to chew, so many of my friends and I just eat the side dishes and rice" (Interview, Student Informant 3, July 22, 2026). Teachers also noticed these patterns and reported them verbally to the food providers, although no formal written feedback mechanism was found in the madrasah's administrative records.

From the perspective of educators, menu issues are not only related to nutritional content, but also to taste, form of presentation, type of side dish, and food habits that students are familiar with. The student's account of hard-to-chew vegetables illustrates this point: the problem lies in texture and presentation rather than nutritional value. Therefore, menu adaptation needs to consider the balance between nutritional standards and the characteristics and preferences of students without compromising food quality and safety. Because feedback currently reaches the food providers only through informal channels, such adaptation depends on verbal communication and has not yet become a systematic process.

## 5. Food Quality and Distribution Supervision

Supervision is carried out to ensure that the food received by students is in a decent, safe condition, and in accordance with the provisions of the program. The head of the madrasah has the responsibility to ensure that the supervision mechanism runs, while teachers, homeroom teachers, and educators make direct observations of the condition of the food when it is received and distributed. Supervision also includes the accuracy of the amount of food, packaging conditions, cleanliness, distribution time, and students' response after the food is consumed.

In its implementation, supervision at the madrasah level is more of a direct examination and delivery of information if problems are found. Students are also an important source of information because they can directly convey experiences related to taste, condition, and acceptance of the food provided. Thus, MBG supervision requires a two-way communication mechanism between program implementers and beneficiaries.

## 6. Program Implementation Problems

The results of the study identified that the problem of MBG is not only related to the provision of food, but also includes managerial and technical aspects at the madrasah level. The head of the madrasah highlighted the importance of coordination and readiness of the madrasah in receiving the program, while teachers and homeroom teachers faced challenges in managing students during the distribution and consumption process. Educators faced technical problems related to timing, food distribution, and communication when conditions in the field changed. Meanwhile, students showed diverse experiences with the menu provided, especially related to tastes and eating habits.

Field observations and interviews revealed a consistent pattern of implementation problems, which prompted specific, albeit temporary, responses from the madrasah management. These issues can be systematically mapped as follows:

- a. Logistical punctuality. Food deliveries were observed to be delayed by 15 to 30 minutes twice a week, disrupting the academic schedule. In response, the madrasah head proactively adjusted the break times on the spot and appointed standby educators at the gate to accelerate the unloading process.
- b. Portion inconsistencies. Occasional mismatches between the number of delivered meals and attending students occurred one to two times per month. In response, homeroom teachers implemented a cross-class distribution system, redirecting excess portions from absent students to classes facing shortages.
- c. Menu rejection. Certain menus (e.g., specific boiled vegetables) faced high rejection rates. In response, teachers initiated an informal motivational approach during meals, encouraging students to try the food, while verbally relaying menu complaints to the delivery personnel in an attempt to bridge the gap in formal evaluation mechanisms.

These differences in perspectives, together with the recurring problems above, show that the problem of MBG is multidimensional. The madrasah's responses were effective in the short term, but they were improvised by individual actors rather than grounded in formal procedures. The solution therefore cannot focus only on the aspect of food provision. It also requires strengthening coordination, communication, supervision, and responsiveness to the needs of students.

## 7. Program Evaluation and Follow-up

Evaluation is an important part of ensuring the sustainability and improvement of the quality of MBG implementation in madrasahs. Madrasah heads, teachers, homeroom teachers, and educators can provide input based on the experience of program implementation, while

students provide information about the acceptance of the menu and their experience during the program. Evaluation can be used to identify problems that arise at the stages of planning, implementation, distribution, menu adaptation, and supervision. The findings of the study show that the involvement of various elements of the madrasah in the evaluation is necessary so that program improvement is not only based on the perspective of the manager, but also considers the experience of teachers, educators, and students as beneficiaries. Thus, the evaluation of MBG needs to be directed at improving governance in a sustainable manner, especially in the aspects of coordination, accuracy of implementation, menu acceptance, food quality supervision, as well as the mechanism for submitting and following up on complaints or input from madrasah residents.



## Discussion (مناقشة)

### 1. Free Nutritious Meal Program Planning

Planning is theoretically positioned as a critical determinant of program success (Hamdanah, 2024). Field findings confirm that MBG planning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District involves multiple stakeholders (madrasah heads, teachers, and educators) in data collection and logistical preparation. However, our findings reveal a significant limitation: while the literature by Prameswari & Susanto (2026) emphasizes the necessity of context-specific planning, the observed planning processes remain predominantly administrative and reactive rather than proactive and adaptive.

Specifically, planning efforts focus on immediate operational readiness – number of beneficiaries, reception timing, and personnel allocation – but lack mechanisms to anticipate contextual variables such as seasonal dietary preferences, cultural food taboos, and emergent student nutritional needs. This gap between normative policy expectations (comprehensive needs assessment) and actual practice (logistical readiness alone) reflects what Achmad et al. (2025) identified as the central challenge of MBG implementation: the disconnect between centralized policy design and localized institutional realities. Our study thus contributes evidence that effective planning requires institutionalizing feedback loops from beneficiaries and implementers before the commencement of each cycle.

### 2. Organizing and Assigning Tasks

Field findings show that there is a clear division of roles in the implementation of MBG. The head of the madrasah coordinates and ensures that the program can run in the madrasah environment. Teachers and homeroom teachers, whose tasks are closer to the students, regulate order when food is received, distributed, and consumed, while educators assist with technical work such as food receipt and distribution arrangements. According to the informants, this division of tasks helps the program run more regularly, which is consistent with organizational theory positing that clear role demarcation and effective communication flows are prerequisites to program integrity (Lendra et al., 2025). However, our findings also reveal that this structural clarity masks a deeper coordination failure. Technical issues require quick communication between parties, especially when food conditions, the number of portions, or distribution times change (Achmad et al., 2025), yet the communication pathways for managing such mid-implementation disruptions remain ambiguous and ad hoc.

The critical distinction our study makes is between structural organization and functional coordination. The problem of organizing does not lie solely in the existence or absence of a division of tasks, but in the effectiveness of coordination among actors. Unlike (Yuniar et al., 2025), who documented organizational frameworks, we present evidence that

rapid problem resolution (e.g., distribution delays, changes in food condition) requires institutionalized escalation protocols, which are absent in the studied madrasahs. This finding is consequential for MBG policy implementation at the national level: structural compliance with role designation does not guarantee program effectiveness. Rather, effectiveness hinges on a clear communication flow and real-time mechanisms between food vendors, madrasah administrators, and supervisory authorities, so that every problem can be immediately forwarded to the party with the authority to handle it. This recommendation extends beyond the descriptive findings of previous research.

### 3. Program Implementation in the Field

Implementation research reveals that policies undergo inevitable transformation when confronted with field realities (Zulaika et al., 2025). Our findings substantiate this: MBG implementation in madrasahs involves continuous micro-adaptations—staggered distribution timing, informal student accommodation processes, and modified storage approaches—none of which are explicitly permitted or guided by policy.

This observation contributes an important critique to the existing literature: the current MBG policy framework treats implementation as a linear execution of predetermined procedures. However, our ethnographic evidence demonstrates that successful implementation requires adaptive management capacity at the institutional level. Teachers and educators engage in what we term "tacit adaptation" making pragmatic adjustments without formal authorization. Rather than viewing this as implementation failure, policy scholarship (as referenced in Mulia et al. 2026) increasingly recognizes such adaptation as necessary. Our contribution is empirically demonstrating that formalizing and legitimating adaptive management—rather than enforcing rigid adherence to centralized protocols—may enhance program effectiveness at the madrasah level.

### 4. Menu Adaptation and Student Admission

Field findings regarding menu adaptation showed that there were differences in the level of food acceptance among students. Based on the information of teachers and homeroom teachers, there were students who could accept the menu well, but there were also students who were less interested in certain menus. This information was strengthened by the students' information which showed that the taste, type of side dish, form of food, and consumption habits were factors that affected their acceptance (Nurulaini & Afifah, 2025). Educators also observed that food that generally meets the needs of the program is not necessarily consumed entirely by students.

This finding is important because the success of the nutrition program is ultimately determined not only by the food that reaches the students, but also by the food actually consumed. Therefore, the results of the field findings show the need for a student feedback mechanism in menu management. Menu adaptation can be done by considering the preferences and characteristics of students, as long as it meets the principles of nutritional adequacy, food safety, and program provisions (Iswanto, 2026).

### 5. Food Quality and Distribution Supervision

Existing research (Febryanti et al., 2025; Rahmah et al., 2025) emphasizes supervision's importance for quality assurance. Our findings confirm multi-level supervision exists institutional supervision by madrasah heads, direct observation by teachers and educators, and informal feedback from students. However, we identify a critical and underexplored management problem: supervision remains diagnostic without institutionalized response mechanisms.

Observations of food quality issues, distribution delays, and student dissatisfaction are communicated informally and often fail to trigger systematic follow-up. This represents what management literature recognizes as a "feedback loop failure" the presence of information without corresponding corrective action systems. We demonstrate that Wahyudi & Cahyawati (2026) correctly identified the need for strengthened MBG systems, but our research specifies that without formalizing supervision findings into actionable improvement protocols, supervision becomes merely symbolic compliance. This has profound implications: policymakers should mandate systematic reporting structures that translate field-level observations into documented improvement cycles.

## 6. Management Problems in the Implementation of MBG

Field findings show that the problem of MBG in madrasahs is not only related to food, but also to the management process. The head of the madrasah emphasized the importance of coordination in ensuring that the program runs as planned. Teachers and homeroom teachers face challenges in managing students during distribution and consumption, while educators face technical problems in receiving and distributing food (Achmad et al., 2025; Yuniar et al., 2025). On the other hand, students provide a diverse experience of the menu received

He difference in findings from each informant shows that one problem can be viewed differently based on the position of each one in the program. From a management perspective, this condition shows that the MBG problem is multidimensional and requires resolution through cross-role coordination (Mulia et al., 2026). Thus, strengthening communication between madrasahs, food providers, teachers, educators, and students is an important part of reducing the gap between MBG policies and their implementation practices.

## 7. Program Evaluation and Follow-up

Field findings show that the evaluation of MBG can be carried out through the direct experience of the implementers and beneficiaries. The head of the madrasah obtained an overview of the program in terms of management and coordination, teachers and homeroom teachers obtained information about the condition of students during the implementation, educators knew various technical issues, while students provided information about the acceptance of the menu and their experience during the program (Wahyudi & Cahyawati, 2026). The difference in information sources is an important basis for conducting a thorough evaluation. If the results of the teacher's observations show that there are foods that students are not interested in, while students also complain about certain menus, this information can be considered in the next menu improvement (Nitiari et al., 2026). Similarly, if educators find problems in distribution, these findings can be used to improve the implementation mechanism.

Thus, field findings show that the evaluation of MBG should not stop at assessing whether food has been distributed, but directed at continuous improvement of planning, organizing, implementing, adapting menus, and supervision, so that the program objectives can be more in line with the needs of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Haurgeulis District.



## Conclusion (خاتمة)

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Haurgeulis District is fundamentally hindered by three primary management problems: disjointed cross-role coordination during distribution, logistical punctuality issues, and the absence of a structured student feedback

mechanism regarding menu acceptance. These challenges significantly undermine the program's governance and nutritional objectives. To improve MBG governance, it is empirically recommended that policymakers and madrasah management establish a formalized, real-time communication channel between local food vendors and school administrators. Furthermore, targeted supervision must shift from mere food inspection to continuous, systematic evaluations that actively incorporate students' dietary feedback, ensuring that nutritional provisions are not only delivered but optimally consumed.



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