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## IMPACT AND CHALLENGES OF MIDDAY MEAL SCHEME IN INDIA

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### **Abstract**

Two of the most pressing problems among India's underprivileged are food and education. People with little financial means have fewer nutritional alternatives and are less likely to attend formal schooling. Children from low-income families, who represent India's future, lack access to these two fundamental requirements. As a result, the Indian government created the MDMS (midday meal plan) to encourage education and supply children with needed nutrients. The "National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education" is the initiative's official name. The purpose of this study is to look into the numerous concerns and obstacles that the MDM system poses in the classroom. In order to acquire a detailed picture of India's midday meal programme, the researcher did a thorough search based on keywords in several academic journal databases and distinct papers released recently. MDMS' long-term objective, according to the study, is to address India's hidden malnutrition problem through targeted treatments. Despite the program's success, child hunger continues to be a major problem in the country. The government should remove the loopholes in the mid-day meal programme so that future generations' lives are not sacrificed to appease the avarice of a few.

**Keywords:** Food, Education, Midday Meal Scheme, Primary Schools, Government.

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### **Introduction**

Two of the most pressing problems among India's underprivileged are food and education. People with little financial resources have fewer nutritional alternatives and are less likely to enrol in school. Children from low-income families, who represent India's future, lack access to these two fundamental requirements. As a response, the Indian government created the MDM Scheme to encourage education while also providing children with needed nourishment. The initiative's official name is the "National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE)". The "National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (commonly known as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme)" was launched in 15<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1995 by government of India, to offer a midday meal to primary school student. In 2002, the Supreme Court mandated that prepared Midday Meals be served in all government schools (rather than dry rations). Midday meal scheme is one of the world largest MDMS in school, with 11 crore kids in 12 lakh Indian schools participating. The MDMS is implemented jointly by state and central government. The expense of the Midday Meal Scheme is split between the state and central governments, with the 25% of expenses will bear by state government and 75% cost will be bear by central government.

The key objectives of launching the Children's Midday Meal Program are as follows: –

- To increase the number of children attending school.
- To ensure that children are retained in classes and that their participation in courses is maintained;
- To improve children's nutritional status, and so on.
- To battle malnutrition and hunger, as well as to improve caste socialisation

### **Objectives of the study**

The study's goal is to look into the following points.

1. Determine the impact of the school lunch programme on children.
2. To learn about the many issues that the MDMS in India faces.
3. To present a detailed picture of India's MDMS.

### **Research methodology**

To acquire a thorough picture of India's midday meal programme, the researcher did an exhaustive search based on keywords in several academic journal databases and distinct publications released recently. The researcher offered a comprehensive image of the MDMS in India after performing an extensive examination of diverse literature from chosen articles and publications.

### **An Overview on Midday Meal Scheme In India**

The school meal programme in India has a long history. In 1925, the Madras Municipal Corporation began a Midday Meal Program for poor children. In 1980, the states of Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Pondicherry used their resources to implement a prepared Midday Meal Program for primary school kids. With their assistance, twelve states were able to implement the midday meal programme on a large or universal scale by 1990-91.

The "National Nutritional Support Program for Primary Education (NP-NSPE)" was established on August 15, 1995 as a centrally funded plan with 2408 blocks. The NP-NSPE had been deployed in all national syndications by 1997-98. The Education Protection System (EPS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) programmes were expanded in 2002 to include students in government grades I to V, state-aided schools, and schools and children from local government and institutions. The scheme provided each kid with 100 grammes of free food every day at school, as well as a subsidy of up to Rs 50 per child for food grain transportation.

The plan was amended in September 2004, "To give a prepared midday meal of 300 calories and 8-12 grammes of protein to all students in grades I – V in government and aided schools, as well as EGS/AIE centres".

In 2007, "the plan was again amended to include kids in the upper primary school in 3479 educationally backward blocks" (class VI to VIII). This extension of the system reached around 1.7 primary school pupils. The effort has included all school students who have studied in governmental, municipal, and governmental elementary and secondary schools, as well as EGS/AIE centres in every area of the country, including Madarsa and Maqtabs funded by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, from 2008/09, i.e. 1 April 2008. (SSA). The caloric composition of the midday meal in primary schools was set at a minimum of 700 calories and 20 grammes of protein per kid every day at school, with 150 grammes of cereal grains (rice/whatever)."In 2009, major modification was done in midday meal scheme to implement the scheme in more proactive manner in all school running under government.

Some major decision was taken to increase the standard of food in midday meal to ensure nutritious and balanced diet per student the amount of standard food material was increased i.e vegetable 65 gm to 70 gm, dal / pulses 25gm to 30 gm but they lowering the supply of oil from 10-7.5 gm,

The payment for cooks and assistants was fixed Rs.0.40 per kid per day labour and other administrative expenses included in the cooking costs. In many situations, the honorarium was so low that finding work to prepare the meal made it extremely difficult. From December 1, 2009, a supplementary provision was made to pay Rs-1000 for each cook-cum-helper in the MDMS. The cook-cum-helper is paid an honorarium at the amount mentioned above. However, several states pay more than Rs.1000/- as an honorarium to cook-cum-assistants through their state funds.

### **Significant Achievements of Midday Meal Program**

Several studies can help, increasing student participation, increasing socioeconomic equality, and improving gender parity. The majority of the children and parents liked the MDMs' installation. MDMS contributes to improving the educational and health status of kids in rural areas.

According to “Professor Amartya Sen's Pratichi Research Team in West Bengal, the mid-day meal has enhanced school enrollment and attendance. In females and children in the SC/ST categories, the increase has been faster”.

The “PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) Report” found that “84 per cent of families stated that their children receive a prepared mid-day meal in school and that youngsters enjoy a diverse menu”.

In schools, good habits such as hand cleaning before and after meals are instilled.

MDM has had a critical role to reduce the dropout rate of girl students, according to the “National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development Indore's”, MDMS in Madhya Pradesh. Children's academic achievement has also improved. The plan has made a substantial contribution to achieving social justice for all members of society.

The Centre for Environment and Food Security performed a “performance evaluation on food security initiatives in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh in 2011. In comparison to Uttar Pradesh, MDM's performance is better in Orissa. 86.7 per cent of Orissa students fell into the second-best category of MDM, whereas 51.8 per cent of children in Uttar Pradesh had a regular but insufficient and inadequate lunch at school”.

According to research performed, “Mid-Day Meals has created a platform for students from a variety of social and economic backgrounds to have meals together, making social fairness simpler to attain. Instructors and students have also reported that the programme has forced them to spend their attention on tasks related to it rather than teaching and learning activities, resulting in lost study time”.

### **Midday Meal Program : Challenges**

The Midday Meal Program was approved by the Supreme Court in 2002. Many Indian governments have accepted it, and as a result, pupils attending state-run or state-assisted schools are entitled to free meals. The noon meal programme serves almost 120 million kids across the country, ensuring that each student receives nutritional meals. Despite the fact that the noon meal programme is a fantastic programme, it has certain obstacles in terms of execution and food quality.

Some of the most serious issues with the Mid-Day Meal Program are listed below.

The government is just interested in statistics, such as how many schools it can cover and feed. They are careless about the quality of MDMS meals. Political parties that use MDMS for political advantage place a lower priority on understanding the ground realities of MDMS food quality in country schools (in backward region). They never check to see if the programme is working well or if the children who are intended to consume it are pleased or dissatisfied.

The majority of students who attend village government schools are impoverished, in some cases midday meal is the only meal for some student those are coming from very poor family background. In some rural area schools no one there to check the quality of food which is serving to students in school. The callous attitude may be observed in this case in Bihar, when 23 children died on July 16, 2013, after eating their midday meal. According to the forensic results, it was a poisoning case since the oil used for cooking had previously been used to store pesticides. There have been several unreported incidents of diarrhoea and poor health among students who ate this

lunch. As a result, parents and children concerned about their safety have refused to eat these noon meals. The MDMS standards stipulate that the meal is of excellent quality and healthy, delicious, and digestible and that it should change from day to day to guarantee menu diversity. During the preparation and presentation of the meal, high standards of sanitation and cleanliness are required, and openness in accounting would be available to public scrutiny.

The CAG's Mid Day Meal performance audit report 2015 showed financial mismanagement on the part of the HRD ministry and that states diverted cash worth 123.29 crores earmarked for the plan. In Karnataka, "ISKCON, which provided Mid Day Meals to students in 304 schools in two taluks of Bellary district, used 1.04 lakh kg less rice than the permitted requirements in cooking MDM" as per audit. The standards also state that the lunch should be served every day consistently and that all supplies should be delivered on time to each school. Food supplies are redirected, supplies are reduced, waste due to miss management and corruption.

In Rajasthan, Orissa, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh, the flagship Mid Day Meal Scheme are plagued by widespread caste and gender prejudice. As evidenced by the recent event in Madhya Pradesh. In some areas, higher caste student decline to consume food prepared by SC/ST women. The MDMS is meant to function in accordance with the guidelines to treat each students equally. It is also anticipated to take advantage of the chance to instil a sense of equality and sharing among youngsters from all social backgrounds.

The researchers performed a survey in a university study named Midday Meals Discrimination Caste (MDM). The survey showed that although 99 per cent of schools have MDMS facilities, and 97% supply prepared meals on most days, food is given just around 11 per cent of communities, while in 2 per cent, it is exceedingly rare. 38 per cent of the instances did not follow the specified menu, and food quality was reported to be poor. The site has additional repercussions for SC children attending school because they often encounter harassment when travelling towns that prevent them from taking part in school, negatively affecting their participation in the MDMS.

## Conclusion

The Mid-Day Meal Program was established in 1995 to provide free lunches to 12 million pupils in elementary and high schools. The plan's purpose is to reduce hunger and improve education while also improving nutritional status and increasing child participation and retention rates. Despite the efforts, the method failed to provide the desired outcome. The effort seeks to protect children in classrooms from hunger, boost school enrolment and attendance, and improve kid sociability. The MDMS' long-term objective is to deploy targeted treatments to alleviate India's hidden malnutrition problem. Despite the program's success, child hunger continues to be a severe problem in the country. The government should remove the loopholes in the mid-day meal programme so that future generations' lives are not sacrificed to appease the avarice of a few. The mid-day meal programme has a lot of potential, which can be realised with more important center-state coordination and oversight of the Scheme's implementation.

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