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ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF THE MBG PROGRAM ON THE MOTIVATION AND LEARNING ENTHUSIASM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CHILDREN AT TK HARAPAN BAN TIMOH

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Abstract
This study aims to analyze the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students at TK Harapan Ban Timoh. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects of this study were early childhood students, teachers, the principal, and the MBG delivery driver involved in the implementation of the program. The research findings indicate that the MBG program has a positive impact on children's motivation and enthusiasm for learning. After the implementation of the program, children appeared more enthusiastic about attending school, more active in participating in learning activities, and more cheerful during the learning process. In addition, the shared meal activities helped children develop social interaction, discipline, and healthy living habits. However, the study also found several challenges, such as children becoming less focused during lessons when the MBG delivery arrived and some children not finishing their meals because the menu did not match their preferences. Therefore, better management of meal distribution schedules and menu variations is needed to optimize the implementation of the MBG program in early childhood education institutions.

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Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial stage in establishing the foundation of children's development, including religious and moral values, socio-emotional skills, cognitive abilities, language development, and physical-motor growth. During this period, children experience the golden age, a critical phase that significantly determines their future quality of life. Therefore, children require optimal stimulation, including adequate and balanced nutritional intake. Good nutrition not only supports physical growth but also influences brain development, concentration, thinking abilities, and children's readiness to participate in learning activities (Black et al., 2013).

In the context of early childhood education, learning motivation and enthusiasm are important factors that influence children's learning success. Learning motivation refers to internal and external drives that encourage children to actively participate, show interest, and engage enthusiastically in learning activities (Sardiman, 2018). Meanwhile, learning enthusiasm reflects children's eagerness, enjoyment, and commitment to participating in educational activities. Children with high learning motivation and enthusiasm tend to interact more effectively, maintain better focus, and actively engage in classroom activities. In contrast, children who experience fatigue, hunger, or inadequate nutrition often have difficulty concentrating and are less active during the learning process (Uno, 2016).

One of the government's efforts to improve the quality of human resources from an early age is through the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG). This national policy aims to ensure that students receive adequate nutritional intake while attending school. The MBG program is implemented through a centralized mechanism and focuses on educational institutions as its primary target, ensuring that all students have equal access to nutritious meals (Nooraini et al., 2025). The existence of this program is particularly important because nutritional problems among children are still prevalent and may result in poor concentration, fatigue, and low learning motivation (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007).

Within the context of early childhood education, the MBG program serves not only as an effort to fulfill children's nutritional needs but also as a means of creating a more comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. Shared mealtime activities at school can function as opportunities for social learning, helping children develop independence, discipline, and healthy lifestyle habits. Furthermore, meeting children's nutritional needs during school hours can improve their physical and emotional well-being, enabling them to participate more effectively in learning activities. Healthy children with sufficient energy tend to be more active, cheerful, and motivated to learn (Santrock, 2011).

However, the implementation of the MBG program in various educational institutions still requires attention, particularly regarding its effectiveness in improving learning motivation and enthusiasm among young children. Research examining the influence of the MBG program on psychological aspects and learning processes in early childhood education remains relatively limited, as previous studies have primarily focused on its impact on children's health and nutritional status (Sardiman, 2018).

Based on the above background, this study aims to analyze the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of early childhood education studies and serve as a reference for policymakers and educational institutions in optimizing the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in a more effective and sustainable manner (Uno, 2016).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth description of the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students at TK Harapan Ban Timoh. Descriptive qualitative research aims to understand phenomena that occur naturally based on real conditions in the field through direct data collection (Creswell, 2014).

The subjects of this study were early childhood students at TK Harapan Ban Timoh who participated in the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), as well as teachers and the principal involved in the implementation of the program. In addition, the MBG delivery driver was included as an informant to provide information regarding the food distribution process. The object of this study was the impact of the MBG program on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students during the learning process. The research was conducted at TK Harapan Ban Timoh in 2026 according to the research schedule.

Data were collected through several techniques: (a) direct observation, in which the researcher observed the implementation of the MBG program and children's behavior during learning activities, including participation, enthusiasm, concentration, and involvement in classroom activities; (b) documentation, which involved collecting data through photographs of activities, program schedules, and other supporting documents; and (c) informal interviews, conducted with the principal, teachers, students, and the MBG delivery driver to obtain information regarding the implementation of the program and changes in children's motivation and learning enthusiasm after the program was introduced.

Interviews with the principal and teachers were conducted to explore the implementation process and the program's impact on learning activities. Interviews with students aimed to understand their responses, feelings, and enthusiasm toward receiving nutritious meals at school. Meanwhile, interviews with the MBG delivery driver were conducted to gather information regarding food distribution procedures, delivery punctuality, and challenges encountered during program implementation. According to Moleong (2013), observation in qualitative research enables researchers to understand behavior and social conditions naturally, making it particularly suitable for studies involving early childhood education.

The research instruments consisted of observation guidelines covering several aspects, including the implementation of the MBG program, children's learning conditions, levels of participation, enthusiasm in learning activities, interactions with teachers and peers, and children's responses during classroom activities. These instruments were developed based on theories of learning motivation and early childhood education (Sardiman, 2018; Uno, 2016).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which includes three stages: (1) data reduction, involving the selection and simplification of data relevant to the research focus; (2) data display, involving the organization of data into descriptive narratives to facilitate understanding; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, involving the interpretation of research findings obtained from the field. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout and after the research process to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the actual conditions at TK Harapan Ban Timoh (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Result

A. Early Childhood

Early childhood refers to individuals aged 0–6 years, as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System of Indonesia. During this period, children experience rapid growth and development, which is why it is often referred to as the golden age. This development encompasses physical, cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and motor aspects that require appropriate stimulation and the fulfillment of essential needs to achieve optimal development (Suyadi, 2017).

Early childhood children possess unique characteristics, such as high curiosity, active movement, a strong interest in new experiences, and a tendency to learn through play and direct experiences. These characteristics were evident among children at TK Harapan Ban Timoh during the learning process. Based on observations, the children actively participated in learning activities and enjoyed interacting with their peers. They also demonstrated considerable interest in various school activities, including the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG).

The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that the children at TK Harapan Ban Timoh showed a high level of enthusiasm for activities involving group participation. According to the principal, children tended to be more excited when engaging in activities that attracted their attention, one of which was the shared mealtime activity provided through the MBG program. This finding indicates that young children are easily motivated by a learning environment that is enjoyable and responsive to their needs.

Interviews with students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) revealed that they enjoyed participating in school activities, particularly the shared meal sessions. The children considered these activities enjoyable because they could share the experience with their friends. In addition, they reported feeling more comfortable and enthusiastic about participating in learning activities after receiving the meals provided through the program.

The social developmental characteristics of early childhood children were also evident during the implementation of the MBG program. The children interacted with one another, shared stories, and communicated with their peers while eating together. According to Susanto (2017), social interactions during early childhood play an important role in developing communication skills, cooperation, and an understanding of the surrounding social environment. Therefore, activities involving group interaction can provide meaningful learning experiences for young children.

In addition to social development, the physical needs of early childhood children are an important factor in supporting the learning process. Children who receive adequate nutritional intake tend to have better energy levels to engage in various learning activities. Conversely, children with insufficient nutritional intake are at greater risk of experiencing reduced concentration and lower participation in learning activities (Black et al., 2013). Therefore, fulfilling children's nutritional needs through the MBG program represents an important effort to support optimal growth and development during early childhood.

The findings of this study indicate that the children at TK Harapan Ban Timoh responded positively to the MBG program. They appeared more cheerful, active, and enthusiastic in participating in school activities. These conditions suggest that fulfilling children's basic needs, including nutritional needs, is closely related to their readiness and enthusiasm for learning. Therefore, attention to early childhood development should not be limited to educational aspects alone but should also include the fulfillment of physical, health, and overall well-being needs.

B. Nutritious food

Nutritious food refers to food that contains essential nutrients required by the body for growth, development, and the maintenance of overall health. These nutrients include carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water, which must be consumed in balanced proportions according to the body's needs (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). For early childhood children, nutritious food plays a crucial role because they are in a period of rapid growth and development.

Adequate nutritional intake supports physical development, cognitive abilities, concentration, and overall health. According to Black et al. (2013), proper nutrition significantly influences brain development, learning capacity, and children's readiness to participate in educational activities. Therefore, providing nutritious food from an early age is an important factor in supporting successful learning outcomes.

Based on observations conducted at TK Harapan Ban Timoh, the meals provided through the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) consisted of various food items containing balanced nutritional components. The menu generally included staple foods, side dishes, vegetables, and fruits. This combination was designed to meet the energy and nutritional needs of children while they were at school.

The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that the meals received by the students were prepared and organized by the MBG program organizers. According to the principal, the meals were sufficiently varied and helped fulfill children's nutritional requirements during school hours. The availability of nutritious meals was particularly beneficial for children who sometimes skipped breakfast or had limited access to adequate food at home.

Interviews with students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) revealed that they enjoyed several of the menu items provided through the MBG program. Foods frequently mentioned as favorites included chicken, snake fruit (salak), and grapes. The children reported feeling happy when receiving meals they liked, which increased their enthusiasm for participating in school activities. They also stated that they felt fuller and had sufficient energy to play and learn with their classmates.

Nutritious food serves not only to satisfy hunger but also plays an important role in maintaining health and strengthening children's immune systems. According to Almatsier (2019), consuming a balanced diet helps maintain bodily functions, supports optimal growth, and enhances children's ability to perform daily activities. When nutritional needs are adequately met, children are able to participate more effectively in learning activities because they are in better physical condition.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that not all children finished the meals provided. The principal (IW) stated that some children disliked certain menu items, resulting in unfinished meals. Differences in food preferences among young children represent one of the challenges in implementing the MBG program. Therefore, providing attractive and varied menus that align with children's preferences is important to ensure that nutritional goals can be achieved effectively.

Overall, nutritious food plays a vital role in early childhood development, both in supporting growth and development and in enhancing learning readiness. The findings at TK Harapan Ban Timoh demonstrate that the provision of nutritious meals through the MBG program helps children obtain better nutritional intake, increases their energy levels during learning activities, and supports the creation of healthy physical conditions that enable them to participate actively in the educational process.

C. Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG)

1. Early Childhood in the Free Nutritious Meal Program

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) is one of the government initiatives designed to support the nutritional needs of students, including early childhood learners. Early childhood children require special attention regarding nutritional intake because they are in a period of rapid growth and development. At this stage, adequate nutrition significantly influences children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and learning development (Suyadi, 2017)

The implementation of the MBG Program at TK Harapan Ban Timoh provides children with access to nutritious meals while attending school. This program serves as an effort to support children's growth and development by providing food that contains essential nutrients needed by the body. Through this program, children not only receive educational services but also benefit from nutritional support that is crucial for their overall development.

The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that children have shown a high level of enthusiasm since the implementation of the MBG Program. According to the principal, children appear more eager to attend school and more active in participating in various learning activities. The presence of the MBG Program has become one of the attractions for children because it allows them to enjoy meals together with their classmates in the school environment.

Interviews with students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) revealed that they enjoyed participating in the MBG Program. The children stated that they looked forward to the meal distribution time each day and were happy to share meals with their friends in the classroom. These activities provided enjoyable experiences while also fostering positive habits in their daily lives.

In addition to being beneficiaries of the program, early childhood children also gain educational experiences through shared meal activities. During the implementation of the MBG Program, children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating, say prayers before and after meals, maintain cleanliness, and finish the food provided to them. These habits form part of character education, which is important to instill from an early age.

According to Mulyasa (2017), character development in early childhood can be achieved through habituation in daily activities. Therefore, shared mealtime activities within the MBG Program not only serve to fulfill children's nutritional needs but also function as an educational medium that helps develop discipline, responsibility, and independence among young learners.

Based on observations, the children appeared to enjoy the shared meal activities and demonstrated positive social interactions with their peers. They exchanged stories, communicated with one another, and learned to follow established rules during the activities. These findings indicate that the MBG Program provides benefits not only in terms of health and nutrition but also in supporting the social and emotional development of early childhood children.

Therefore, the inclusion of early childhood learners as the primary beneficiaries of the MBG Program plays a vital role in the program’s success. Through the fulfillment of nutritional needs and the development of positive habits during shared meal activities, the MBG Program can serve as an effective strategy for supporting the growth, development, and learning readiness of early childhood children at TK Harapan Ban Timoh.

2. Free Nutritious Meal Menu

The meal menu provided through the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) is designed to meet the nutritional needs of early childhood learners during their participation in school activities. The meals are intended not only to reduce hunger but also to provide essential nutrients, including energy, protein, vitamins, and minerals that are necessary for children's growth and development. The provision of balanced nutritious meals is particularly important for young children because they require adequate nutritional intake to support their physical development, cognitive growth, and learning abilities (Almatsier, 2019).

Based on observations conducted at TK Harapan Ban Timoh, the meals provided through the MBG Program consist of staple foods, side dishes, vegetables, and fruits that vary from day to day. This menu variation aims to ensure that children receive adequate nutrition while also increasing their interest in consuming the meals provided. The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that the menus are determined by the program organizers and are adjusted to meet the nutritional requirements of early childhood children.

Interviews with students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) revealed that they enjoyed several of the menu items provided through the MBG Program. Foods such as chicken, snake fruit (salak), and grapes were frequently mentioned as their favorite menu items. However, some children occasionally did not finish their meals because they disliked certain foods. This finding suggests that providing attractive and varied menus that are suitable for the characteristics and preferences of young children remains important in order to achieve the nutritional objectives of the program effectively.

The meal menu provided through the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) at TK Harapan Ban Timoh is presented in the following table.

No	Tanggal/Hari	Menu MBG	Kandungan Gizi Utama
1.	Monday, April 13, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Egg: animal protein; Vegetables: vitamins, minerals, and fiber; Milk: calcium, protein, and vitamins; Grapes: vitamins and antioxidants

2.	Tuesday, April 14, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Egg: animal protein; Vegetables: vitamins, minerals, and fiber; Milk: calcium, protein, and vitamins; Grapes: vitamins and antioxidants.

3.	Wednesday, April 15, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Chicken: animal protein; Tempeh: plant-based protein; Vegetables: vitamins, minerals, and fiber; Longan: vitamins and antioxidants.

4.	Thursday, April 16, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Egg: animal protein; Tempeh: plant-based protein; Carrots and lettuce: vitamins, minerals, and fiber; Watermelon: vitamins and hydration.
5.	Friday, April 17, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Fish: animal protein and omega-3 fatty acids; Tempeh: plant-based protein; Vegetables: vitamins, minerals, and fiber; Snake fruit (*salak*): vitamins and natural energy.
6.	Monday, April 20, 2026		Egg: animal protein; Tofu: plant-based protein; Peanut sauce: plant protein, healthy fats, and carbohydrates; Potato: carbohydrates; Orange: vitamin C.

7.	Tuesday, April 21, 2026		Noodles: carbohydrates; Tofu and chicken: protein; Dumplings and noodle broth: fats; Snake fruit (*salak*): vitamins.
8.	Wednesday, April 22, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Chicken: animal protein; Tofu: plant-based protein; Vegetables: fiber; Longan: vitamins.

9.	Thursday, April 23, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Chicken: animal protein; Tofu: plant-based protein; Vegetables: fiber; Dragon fruit: vitamins.
10	Friday, April 24, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Chicken and tofu: protein; Orange: vitamin C.

11	Monday, April 27, 2026		Bread: carbohydrates; Sausage: protein; Peanuts: healthy fats; Lettuce: vitamins and fiber; Watermelon: vitamins.
12	Tuesday, April 28, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Egg and tofu: protein; Vegetables: fiber; Longan: vitamins.

13	Wednesday, April 29, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Meat: protein; Vegetables and banana: vitamins and fiber.
14	Thursday, April 30, 2026		Chicken and peanuts: protein; Potato: carbohydrates; Grapes and carrots: vitamins; Fruits and vegetables: fiber.

15	Monday, May 4, 2026		Egg: protein; Noodles: carbohydrates; Passion fruit: vitamins and minerals; Vegetables: fiber; Peanuts: protein.
16	Tuesday, May 5, 2026		Bread: carbohydrates; Lettuce and grapes: vitamins and minerals; Fruits and vegetables: fiber; Tempeh: protein.
17	Wednesday, May 6, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Orange and vegetables: vitamins and minerals; Fruits and vegetables: fiber.

18	Thursday, May 7, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Chicken and tempeh: protein; Grapes, cucumber, and lettuce: vitamins and minerals; Fruits and vegetables: fiber.
19	Friday, May 8, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Fish: protein and omega-3 fatty acids; Tofu: protein; Vegetables: fiber; Snake fruit (*salak*): vitamins.
20	Monday, May 11, 2026		Rice: carbohydrates; Fish: protein and omega-3 fatty acids; Tofu: protein; Vegetables: fiber; Snake fruit (*salak*): vitamins.

3. MBG Distribution Schedule

The meal distribution schedule is an important component in the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG). An effective schedule helps ensure the smooth distribution of meals to students while maintaining the continuity of learning activities. Regular meal distribution also helps children develop disciplined and healthy eating habits during their time at school.

Based on observations conducted at TK Harapan Ban Timoh, meals under the MBG Program were distributed during school hours according to the schedule established by the program organizers. The meals were delivered directly to the school by MBG delivery personnel and subsequently distributed to all students. Before the meals were served, teachers instructed the children to wash their hands and sit properly to ensure that the distribution process proceeded in an orderly manner.

The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that the meal distribution schedule had been adjusted to fit the school's learning activities, allowing children to enjoy their meals without significantly disrupting the educational process. According to the principal, timely meal delivery is one of the key factors contributing to the successful implementation of the MBG Program, as it ensures that meals are distributed to children while they are still fresh and suitable for consumption. Interviews with the MBG delivery personnel indicated that the food distribution process generally proceeded smoothly and on schedule. Prior to each delivery, the delivery team coordinated with the school regarding the number of students who would receive meals on that particular day. This coordination was conducted to ensure that all children received meals in the appropriate quantities.

Students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) stated that they always looked forward to meal distribution time because it was one of the most enjoyable activities during the school day. They expressed happiness when the meals arrived and appreciated the opportunity to eat together with their classmates. The activity served not only as mealtime but also as an opportunity for children to interact and share experiences with their peers.

The implementation of the meal distribution schedule also provides opportunities for children to learn discipline and healthy lifestyle habits. Children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating, say prayers before and after meals, and clean their eating areas after finishing their meals. According to Mulyasa (2017), habits that are practiced repeatedly during early childhood can contribute significantly to the development of positive character traits and behaviors.

Nevertheless, several challenges were identified in the implementation of the meal distribution schedule. The principal (IW) explained that when the MBG delivery vehicle arrived at the school, some children became overly excited, causing their attention to shift away from ongoing learning activities. As a result, the children tended to become noisier and impatient while waiting for the meals to be distributed. Under these circumstances, teachers were required to provide additional guidance and supervision to maintain order during the process.

Overall, the meal distribution schedule of the MBG Program at TK Harapan Ban Timoh has been implemented effectively. Timely distribution, coordination between the school and delivery personnel, and the active involvement of teachers in guiding students have all contributed to the successful implementation of the program. With proper schedule management, the MBG Program not only helps meet children's nutritional needs but also supports the development of positive habits and creates a more enjoyable learning environment for early childhood learners.

D. Children's Learning Motivation and Enthusiasm

Learning motivation and enthusiasm are important factors that influence the success of the learning process in early childhood education. Learning motivation can be defined as the internal and external drive that encourages an individual to engage in learning activities and achieve specific goals (Sardiman, 2018). Meanwhile, learning enthusiasm refers to a condition that reflects children's interest, eagerness, and willingness to actively participate in learning activities. In early childhood, learning motivation and enthusiasm are strongly influenced by the environment, physical condition, learning atmosphere, and the fulfillment of children's basic needs.

Based on observations conducted at TK Harapan Ban Timoh, the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) has had a positive influence on children's learning motivation and enthusiasm. The children appeared more eager to attend school and more actively participated in learning activities after the implementation of the program. The provision of free nutritious meals became one of the factors that attracted children to attend school and engage in various educational activities.

The principal, identified by the initials (IW), explained that before the implementation of the MBG Program, several children showed limited enthusiasm for attending school and occasionally demonstrated low interest in participating in classroom activities. However, after the program was introduced, the children appeared happier, more active, and more enthusiastic during their time at school. According to the principal, this change was evident through the increased enthusiasm displayed by children during both learning activities and the shared mealtime sessions that form part of the MBG Program.

These findings are consistent with Sardiman's (2018) view that motivation functions as a driving force that encourages individuals to engage in learning activities, directs their learning efforts, and helps maintain persistence in the learning process. In the context of this study, the nutritious meals provided through the MBG Program served as a form of external motivation that encouraged children to participate more actively in educational activities at school.

In addition to increasing children's enthusiasm for attending school, the MBG Program also had an impact on their physical condition, which in turn influenced their learning enthusiasm. Students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) stated that they were pleased with the program because it allowed them to enjoy meals they liked and share mealtime with their classmates. They also reported feeling stronger, less hungry, and more comfortable participating in learning activities after receiving meals from the program.

These findings suggest that the fulfillment of nutritional needs is closely associated with children's readiness to learn. According to Black et al. (2013), adequate nutrition plays an essential role in supporting brain development, concentration, memory, and children's ability to absorb and process learning experiences. Children who receive sufficient nutritional intake generally have higher energy levels, enabling them to participate more effectively in learning activities compared to children who experience nutritional deficiencies.

The shared mealtime activities provided through the MBG Program also contributed to children's learning enthusiasm. The children appeared to enjoy eating together with their classmates and considered the activity to be an enjoyable experience. A positive and pleasant school environment can increase children's comfort and engagement in learning. According to Susanto (2017), an enjoyable learning environment can enhance learning motivation and encourage children to participate more actively in educational activities.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the MBG Program also faced several challenges that could affect children's concentration during learning activities. The principal (IW) explained that when the meal delivery vehicle arrived at the school, some children became overly

excited, causing their attention to shift away from ongoing classroom activities. The children tended to focus more on waiting for meal distribution than on listening to the teacher's explanations. As a result, the classroom atmosphere became noisier and the learning process was temporarily disrupted.

In addition, some children did not finish the meals provided because certain menu items did not match their personal preferences. This finding indicates that the success of the MBG Program depends not only on the availability of nutritious meals but also on the suitability of the menu for the characteristics and preferences of early childhood learners. Therefore, menu variety and the scheduling of meal distribution should be carefully considered to maximize the benefits of the program.

Overall, children's learning motivation and enthusiasm at TK Harapan Ban Timoh improved following the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program. The children became more enthusiastic about attending school, more active in participating in learning activities, and more engaged in interactions with teachers and peers. These findings indicate that the MBG Program not only contributes to fulfilling children's nutritional needs but also plays an important role in creating a more enjoyable learning environment and supporting the optimal development of early childhood learners.

Discussion

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) has had a significant influence on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students at TK Harapan Ban Timoh. This influence is reflected in the increased enthusiasm of children to attend school following the implementation of the program. The principal, identified by the initials (IW), stated that children became more eager to participate in learning activities after the introduction of the MBG Program. This finding is consistent with Sardiman's theory in Teaching and Learning Interaction and Motivation (2018), which states that learning motivation serves as a driving force that enhances an individual's enthusiasm for engaging in learning activities. In the context of this study, nutritious meals functioned as an external factor that encouraged children to participate more actively in classroom learning.

In addition, the MBG Program had a positive impact on the physical and emotional well-being of the children. Students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) reported feeling stronger, happier, and less easily fatigued while participating in school activities. The children also appeared more active and cheerful during the learning process. These findings indicate that the fulfillment of nutritional needs is closely associated with children's readiness to learn. This result is in line with the findings of Black et al. (2013), who argued that adequate nutrition contributes to physical development, concentration, and children's preparedness for learning activities.

The shared mealtime activities conducted at school also provided social benefits for early childhood learners. The principal (IW) explained that children learned to develop positive habits such as praying before meals, washing their hands, maintaining cleanliness, and interacting with their peers during mealtime activities. These findings suggest that the MBG Program functions not only as a means of meeting children's nutritional needs but also as a medium for character development and the establishment of positive habits during early childhood.

Nevertheless, the study also identified several challenges associated with the implementation of the MBG Program. The principal (IW) reported that children's excessive excitement when the MBG delivery vehicle arrived sometimes caused them to lose focus on classroom activities, resulting in a noisier learning environment. Furthermore, students identified by the initials (MR), (UK), and (F) acknowledged that some menu items did not match their personal preferences, leading them to leave portions of their meals unfinished.

These findings indicate that the implementation of the MBG Program still requires further evaluation, particularly regarding the scheduling of meal distribution and the provision of menu variations that are better suited to the needs and preferences of young children.

Overall, the Free Nutritious Meal Program at TK Harapan Ban Timoh has made a positive contribution to improving the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students. The program has helped create a more enjoyable learning environment while simultaneously supporting the fulfillment of children's nutritional needs during school hours. Therefore, effective collaboration among schools, parents, and MBG program providers is essential to ensure that the program is implemented more effectively and continues to provide optimal benefits for the growth, development, and educational experiences of early childhood learners.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (Program Makan Bergizi Gratis / MBG) on the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students at TK Harapan Ban Timoh. Based on the observations and interviews conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn. the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) can serve as an effective initiative for enhancing the motivation and learning enthusiasm of early childhood students when it is implemented optimally, consistently, and in accordance with children's needs. The program not only contributes to fulfilling children's nutritional requirements but also supports the creation of a positive learning environment that promotes their overall growth and development.

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