

Assessment of Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Background: Teachers are being overburdened due to mid day meal and are not able to provide sufficient timing for teaching and learning process to the students. There are many records to be maintained associated with mid day meal. The research approach adopted was quantitative which was descriptive in nature. The study assumed that teachers face problems in implementation of mid day meal program.

Materials and Methods: The research was conducted in primary and middle schools of palampur block Distt. Kangra (H.P). Randomisation sampling technique was done to select school sample, total enumeration was done for teachers. The tool was semi structured questionnaire for assessing the problems faced by subjects.

Results: The result of the study revealed that 57.1% teachers said implementation of MDM is problem the teachers. 73.8 % consider there is wastage of teaching time, 81% consider that workload has increased due to this scheme. 73.8% considered it as an additional assignment which makes them overburden. 76.2% said time table gets disturbed due to this. 60% teachers find difficult to procure ration. 78.1% found difficult to procure LPG cylinder. 81% Have fear of stealing articles. 100% teachers were in favour of implementation of this scheme.

Conclusion: On interviewing teachers handling mid day meal it was found that major problem is wastage of teaching time in making preparations for the meal and increase in workload. It was also found that teachers in schools who have less than 20 students face problem in managing due to insufficient funds and LPG than in schools who have strength more than 20. Most of the teachers were in favour of privatization of the scheme.

Keywords: Mid day meal, primary and middle schools, children, teachers

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BACKGROUND

The Mid-day Meal Scheme, a school nutrition initiative by the Government of India, aims to enhance the nutritional well-being of school-age children across the country. This program provides complimentary lunches during school days for students in primary and upper primary classes attending government, government-aided, local body, and Education Guarantee Scheme schools.(3) On 15 August 1995, the Government of India introduced the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education

(NP-NSPE), recognizing the potential of the Mid-day Meal Scheme to boost enrollment, retention, and attendance by addressing classroom hunger.(5) The program's primary goal is to elevate the nutritional status of children in government school primary sections, encouraging regular school attendance among economically disadvantaged children and enabling them to focus on classroom activities. Realizing the immense potentialities of the program, the government has

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materialized its priorities thereby, making concrete efforts towards improving MDM implementation.

ENTITLEMENTS

The court mandated that all state governments must ensure the provision of cooked meals, with a minimum of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein, on each school day, covering a duration of at least 200 days per year.(3).

Regarding micronutrients such as vitamin A, iron, and folate tablets, as well as de-worming medicines, students are entitled to receive the specified amounts outlined in the school health program of the National Rural Health Mission. Unfortunately, the Mid-day Meal (MDM) program falls short in realizing its multifaceted advantages due to various factors, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient prioritization by policymakers, a lack of integration, and limited awareness. (4). Poor community involvement, teachers viewing MDM as an additional burden, and negative perceptions among staff members contribute to the scheme's drawbacks.(15). Evaluations and literature on the MDM program highlight poor awareness, negative attitudes from staff and teachers, and dissatisfaction among children as significant reasons for its shortcomings. Despite increased financial support, the program struggles to effectively achieve its stated objectives.(7)

Studies have revealed different problems at the grass root level implementation of the programme. Absence of appropriate working norms, unawareness about the NP-NSPE guidelines, poor distribution of responsibility, inadequate salaries of staff; delay in reimbursement of the salary, lack of support from the schools and hazardous working conditions which saps away the motivation of the staff and makes it difficult to retain the MDM Staff. (10). Besides poor monitoring and supervision by teachers, education on nutrition, health, sanitation and hygiene is also not imparted.(12,14). Negligible efforts are made to increase the number of beneficiaries and there is poor understanding about the importance of MDM among students Moreover, irregular and delayed supplies of raw ration that to of poor quality is a result of poor management and corruption.(16,20)

The implementation of the Mid-day Meal Scheme has presented several challenges for teachers, headmasters, school administrators, and even the children. (17). One significant issue revolves around financial constraints among staff members, requiring teachers and administrators to navigate how to manage these limitations. A notable problem is the financial burden experienced by teachers, impacting their ability to effectively carry out their roles. (18). Additionally, there are other challenges in the implementation of the scheme that teachers encounter, further complicating its execution.(19).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study the problems faced by the teachers in implementation of Mid Day Meal
2. To study teachers' perceptions, problems and suggestion towards Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Study Type and Design: The study was conducted in primary and middle schools of palampur block Distt. Kangra (Himachal Pradesh, India) for 2 years (2022-2024).

Study population: The study focuses on mid day meal reported on Palampur block. Data sources included government schools involved in mid day meal programme.

Study duration: Study covered two year period from 2022-2024, during which information were collected.

Sample size calculation: Total sample were taken within 20 schools. T he schools were selected by random sampling.

Inclusion criteria

1. All teachers handling midday meal.
2. Teachers who handled mid day meal services for atleast 1 year in past 5 year.

Exclusion criteria:

1. Private schools are excluded

Strategy for data collection:

Data collection was done by interview method in one to one way.

It consisted of 3 sections

Section A: Observation by researcher(check list)

Section B: General information (To be filled by head of the school)

Section C: Semi structured (To be filled by teacher)

It consist of 2 parts

Part 1: Perception of teacher

Part 2 : Problems faced by teachers

Ethical issues and informed consent:

Permission was taken from the block elementary education officer Palampur before initiating the study. Consent was taken from the teachers. The participation in the study was voluntary.

DATA ANALYSIS

The statistical measures used to analyze the data are

- 1) Percentage was used to analyze general background information.
- 2) Bar Graphs and Pie Charts tables were made using percentages to assess the different problems.

RESULTS

The study reported that 100% schools that have separate kitchen LPG, is available for cooking, kitchens are well ventilated and lighted and having kitchen for cooking and as well as adequate utensils are available for cooking and serving food. 100% schools have store room available to store the commodities and is safe for storage purpose and

is well lighted and ventilated. 100% schools have separate area available for the serving of food. 100% of schools have toilets available and having separate toilets for girls and boys and are functional. It also depicts that all the schools have water available out of which 70% get water from cooperation and 30% gets from handpump.

Table No: 1 Assessing infrastructure facilities based on the NP-NPSE guidelines:

VARIABLES	Yes%	No%
KITCHEN		
Separate kitchen shed	100	0
LPG cylinder	100	0
Lighted and ventilated	100	0
Platform	100	0
Adequate utensils	100	0
STORE ROOM		
Storeroom available	100	0
Safe food storage facility	100	0
Lighted and ventilated	100	0
SERVING AREA		
Separate area available	100	0
Floored and covered	100	0
Clean and appropriate	100	0
CAMPUS		
Toilet	100	0
Functional toilet	100	0
Separate for girls and boys	100	0
WATER FACILITY		
Water available entire day	100	0
Source of water	70 (cooperation)	30 (Handpump)
WASTE DISPOSABLE METHOD		
	25 (OUT OF SCHOOL)	75 (DUMPING PIT)

All the teachers have perception that food provided is nutritious, well balanced and are satisfied with the quality of the food provided. 59.5% teachers are in a view that enrollement has increased due to this scheme. 73.8% hold

a view that there is improvement in learning level among students. Teachers in this study are satisfied by the quality of food provided.

Table :2 Perception of teachers regarding mid day meal

S.NO	STATEMENT	YES(n=40)	%	NO(n=40)	%
1.	Mid day meal provides nutritious and balanced diet.	40	100	0	0
2	Satisfied with the quality of food provided.	40	100	0	0
3	Increased enrollement of the students.	24	60	16	40
4	Improvement in learning level of students.	29	73.8	11	26.2
5	Developing hygienic values among students	40	100	0	0
6	Discrimination with any child.	0	0	40	100
7	Meal liked by the students	40	100	0	0
8	Meal provided with all the possible precautions and cleanliness	40	100	0	0
9	Any help from local bodies regarding this scheme.	0	0	40	100

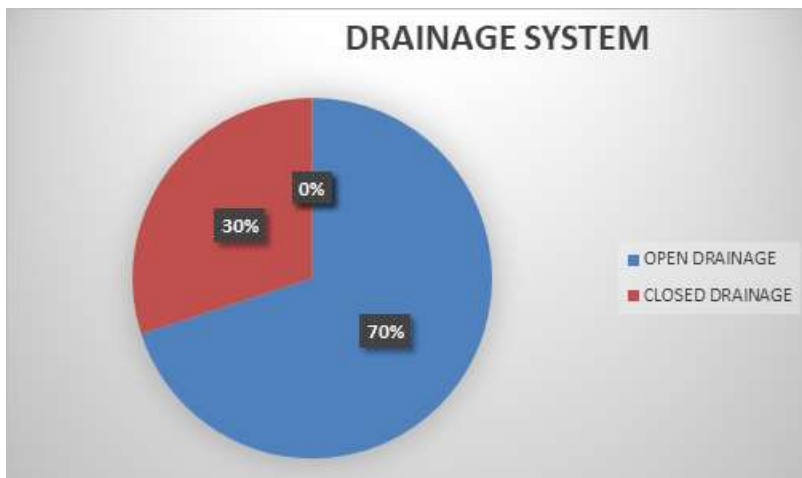


Figure 1 represents drainage system of mid day meal

Figure 1 shows that 70% have open drainage system, only 30% have closed drainage system. 25% schools through their waste out of school premises and 75% dumping pit in the school for waste disposal.

It also shows that there is no discrimination between any student. Meal is being liked by all the students and meal is provided with all the possible precautions and cleanliness. There is no help provided from any local body to run this scheme. Results showed that more than half teachers (57.1%) face problem in implementation of MDM. 81%

feels that their workload has been increased due to MDM. 42.9% feels that quality of education has suffered while managing this scheme.

Majority of teachers (73.8%) consider it as an additional assignment. 64.3 % of teachers are able to give proper time for teaching and learning process. 76.2% feels that their time table gets disturbed, 57.1% says that attention of students gets distracted. 100% schools provide handwashing facility to the students 14.3% teachers feel that students sleepy after having Mid day meal. (23)

Table :3 General information regarding mid day meal

S.NO	STATEMENTS	YES(n=40)	%	NO(n=40)	%
1	Implementation is a problem for the teachers.	23	57.1	17	42.9
2	Wastage of teaching time of the teachers.	29	73.8	11	26.2
3	Increased workload.	32	81	8	19
4	Quality of education suffered because of attention towards Mid Day Meal related activities.	17	42.9	23	57.1
5	Additional assignment making them overburdened.	29	73.8	11	26.2
6	Proper time to teaching learning process	14	35.7	26	64.3
7	Time table get disturbed	31	76.2	9	23.8
8	Attention of students is distracted from studies	23	57.1	17	42.9
9	School provides hand wash facility to the students before and after taking Mid Day Meal.	40	100	0	0
10	Students feel sleepy after having Mid Day Meal.	6	14.3	34	85.7

Results depicts that all teachers feel that funds are provided on time. 78.6% teachers feel that funds provided are sufficient. 57.1% teachers face no difficulty in procurement of dry ration from TPDS. 59.5% face problem in procuring ration from local shops.(22)

Majority of teachers (78.6%) says that fuel provided is sufficient for cooking 61.9% teachers face problem in procuring LPG cylinder. 81% have fear of stealing of

cooking materials and utensils. All teachers were in a view that infrastructure is sufficient.

Majority (78.7%) of teachers feel that remuneration provided to cooks is enough. 95.2% teachers observed that food is being cooked by wearing apron, gloves, headwear. 21.4% feels that school compound is made dirty by throwing meal by students. Despite of so many problems being faced 100% of teachers are in favour of this scheme. (21)

Table :4 Problems faced by teachers during implementation mid day meal

S.NO	STATEMENTS	YES(n=40)	%	NO(n=40)	%
11	Funds provided by the government to run the scheme received on time.	40	100	0	0
12	Funds provided by the government sufficient to provide quality food	31	78	9	22.5
13	There is difficulty in procuring dry ration from TPDS for preparing mid day meal.	17	42.9	23	57.1
14	There is difficulty in procurement of other ration from shops	24	60	16	40
15	Feul provided is sufficient for cooking .	31	78	9	22.5
16	There is problem in procuring LPG cylinder	25	62.5	15	37.5
17	Is there fear of stealing of cooking material and utensils	32	80	8	20
18	Sufficient infrastructure (kitchen-cum-store) is available in the schools for implementing Mid Day Meal.	40	100	0	0
19	The remuneration provided to the cook-cum-helper is meager to motivate her to provide service under Mid Day Meal Scheme.	31	78	9	22.5
20	Is it difficult to find cook/helper	18	45	22	55
21	Cooking of meal is being done in a hygienic manner (wearing head gears and gloves)	38	95	2	5.0
22	School compound is made dirty by throwing the cooked meal served to the students here and there.	9	22.5	31	77.5
23	Are you in favour of implementation of the scheme.	40	100	0	0

Results depict that if cook is not available than substitute for cook is (31%), helper is 31% and availability of peon is (38.1%). Due to deficiency of staff it is difficult to arrange mid day meal.

Mid day meal remains a significant challenge to provide nutritious meal to students. This study aimed to study problems and challenges faced by teachers to run this schemes. Although

DISCUSSION

According to the study's findings, the MDMS had a positive impact on enrolment, attendance, and retention rates.(2, 9). During the course of this study, the majority of the students from each of the schools felt that the provision of a midday meal is the most important aspect that encourages them to go to school on a consistent basis.(1)

Over-storage of the food, and lack of timely delivery of food items there are also instances that due to the long supply chain, the supplied food grains got adulterated and pilfered.

Moreover there is a paucity of funding for the program as due to large families and economic backwardness they often face the issue of delay in payment and late reimbursement.(8) Over and Lack of cooperation and coordination and duplicity of work leads to low motivation among the beneficiaries. Researchers have pointed out that

adolescents in India consume nutritionally deficient diet.(10, 13)

According to National Family Health Survey-5 reported the worsening condition of child malnutrition. India accounts for 30% of the world's stunted children and 50% of the severely wasted children. (6, 11)

Very few studies on a sub-national level have investigated for mid day meal program, so these investigations must be carried out in all states to create a more successful about mid day meal program.

Public health importance of the study findings

The school should regularly maintain a monitoring system for the midday meal service.

Regular quality checks are necessary for the food grains that are provided to the school.

A team of health professionals should test cooked meals.

CONCLUSION

From the study it can be concluded that MDM implementation is a problem for teachers as it is an additional assignment making them overburden. This results in wastage of their teaching and learning time. Time table also gets disturbed due to this. Various records of purchase and consumption has to be maintained.

Therefore various measures must be taken to relieve the burden from the teachers so that proper time is given for teaching and learning process.

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