



Benefits Of Mid-Day Meal Programs In India: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

In order to solve the twin problems of education and malnutrition, the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) program implementation has become essential. This summary shows the multiple advantages of these initiatives, which give youngsters free, wholesome meals. First off, enrolment and attendance rates in schools have dramatically increased as a result of MDM programs. They draw kids from socioeconomically poor households by providing a daily meal incentive, which motivates them to go to school consistently and lowers dropout rates. As a result, this encourages inclusive education and improves educational results. Second, these initiatives have been effective in battling malnutrition. Through MDM programs, wholesome meals are offered to children as a supplement to their nutritional requirements, ensuring they acquire essential nutrients for normal growth and development. As a result, the programs help to lower the incidence of malnutrition and related health problems among kids. Additionally, MDM programs benefit children's cognitive skills and levels of concentration. A healthy diet promotes brain growth and develops cognitive abilities, which enhances academic performance and learning outcomes. The MDM programs also contribute to social welfare by giving local populations access to work opportunities. Meal preparation and distribution include a number of partners, creating jobs and enhancing regional economies. In conclusion, India's Mid-Day Meal initiatives have succeeded in tackling both the concerns of nutrition and education. These initiatives help kids stay in school, fight malnutrition, sharpen their minds, and support regional economic growth. For India's children to have a better future, their implementation and growth must continue.

Keywords: Mid-Day-Meal, Nutrition, Malnutrition, Education, School Education, regional Growth.

Introduction:

Governments all across the world place a high priority on providing pupils with wholesome meals. Providing children with proper nutrition has been a primary issue in India, where a sizeable section of the population lives below the poverty line. The deployment of mid-day meal programs across the nation has become recognized as a revolutionary endeavor in this regard. By giving pupils free meals throughout the school day, these initiatives hope to solve the dual problems of starvation and education. The

advantages of mid-day meal programs in India have grown clearer over time, producing favorable results for both the kids and the country as a whole.

First off, schoolchildren's malnutrition has been significantly reduced as a result of midday meal programs. Chronic undernutrition affects a large number of children in India and can have a negative impact on their physical and cognitive growth. These programs aid in preventing malnutrition and enhancing general health by delivering nourishing meals that contain important vitamins, minerals, and proteins. Regular access to food not only ensures that kids get the nutrients they need but also helps them avoid common malnutrition-related illnesses like anemia. In order to improve schoolchildren's development and well-being and to foster a healthier next generation, midday meal programs are crucial. Figure 1 shows the benefits of the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme.

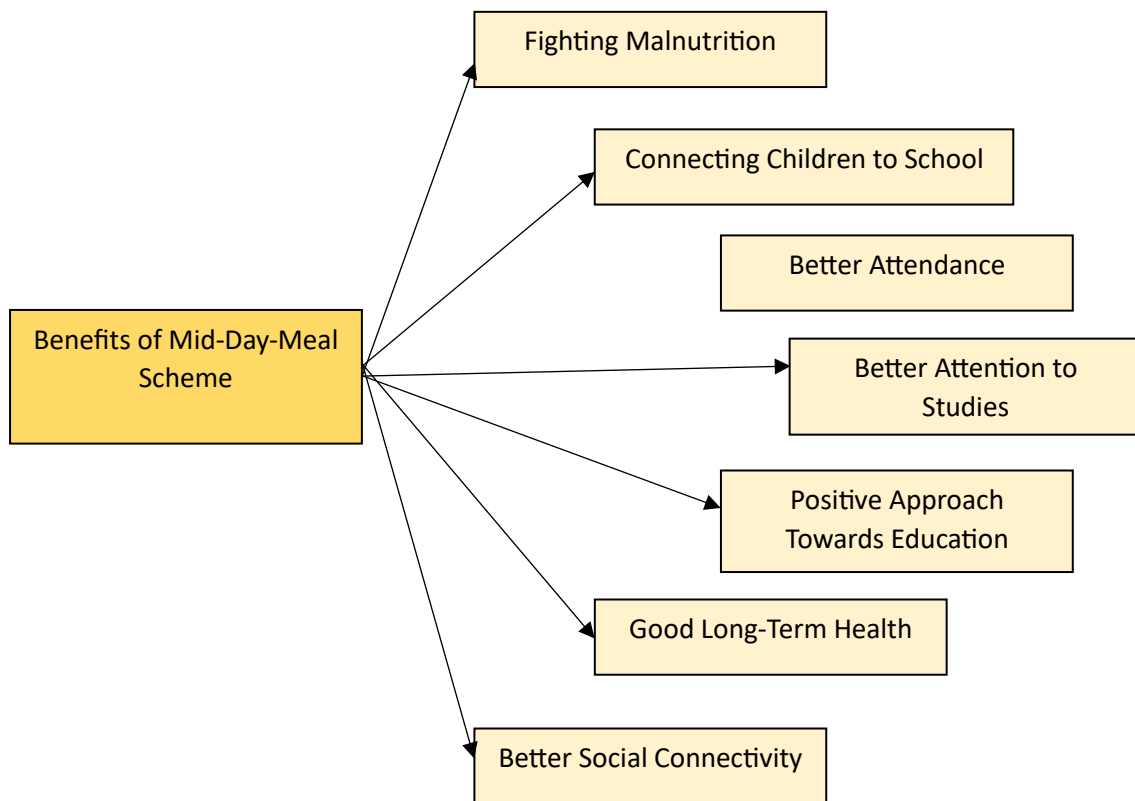


Figure 1 Benefits of Mid-Day-Meal Scheme

Second, the implementation of midday food programs has greatly boosted enrolment and attendance rates at schools. Free meals serve as a strong incentive for parents to send their kids to school in a nation where access to education continues to be a problem for many. By removing the cost of daily meals, these programs lessen the financial burden on families while also improving access to and interest in school. Children from underprivileged households, therefore, have a higher likelihood of enrolling in school and maintaining regular attendance. Mid-day meal programs aid in minimizing the

educational inequalities that exist in India, creating social fairness, and raising the country's total literacy rate.

The advantages of mid-day meal programs go beyond their nutritional and educational advantages. These programs also have a large economic impact. The programs assist nearby farmers and suppliers by using locally sourced ingredients, boosting rural economies. Furthermore, the widespread implementation of such programs opens up job chances for cooks, helpers, and other staff members involved in meal preparation and distribution. This not only lowers unemployment but also encourages entrepreneurship and skill-building at the local level. Thus, mid-day meal programs act as a catalyst for social and economic development, advancing the country as a whole.

Additionally, these programs have a favorable impact on gender equality. Girls in India have historically encountered many obstacles to education, such as societal biases, economic limitations, and cultural restrictions. The supply of midday meals has been essential in removing these obstacles. These programs aid in closing the gender gap in education by promoting school enrollment and attendance, particularly among females. They encourage girls to continue their education, improving their possibilities for the future and dispelling gender norms. Therefore, the mid-day meal programs encourage gender equality and help to create a society that is more diverse and egalitarian.

In conclusion, schoolchildren, families, and the country as a whole have benefited greatly from the establishment of mid-day meal programs in India. Malnutrition problems have been successfully treated by these initiatives, which have also boosted the local economy, increased school enrollment and attendance rates, and supported gender equality. Free, wholesome meals for kids not only fuel their bodies and brains but also foster a supportive environment for their overall growth. To secure a better and healthier future for future generations, it is essential to invest in and grow these programs going forward.

Literature Review:

India has developed mid-day meal programs with the aim of enhancing children's nutritional status and educational outcomes, particularly those coming from economically disadvantaged households. With an emphasis on multiple research projects, this review of the literature intends to investigate the advantages of mid-day meal programs in India. The review sheds light on how these programs affect kids' social development, academic achievement, school attendance, and health.

According to **Jayaraman and Das (2013)**, mid-day meal programs in India considerably improve children's nutritional intake. These programs frequently offer a balanced meal that contains the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients necessary for a child's growth and development. The authors point out that offering lunchtime meals has decreased the number of school-aged children who are underweight.

Moreover, mid-day meal programs considerably improve the nutritional health of children in India, according to studies. Reduced malnutrition rates, improved weight

growth, and improved general health have all been linked to the provision of nutritious, well-balanced meals **Gupta & Kapil (2012)**

Similarly, a study by **Goyal, Singh, and Joshi (2015)** found that the MDM program has a considerable impact on treating the problem of undernutrition among Indian school-aged children. A hot, cooked meal served during school hours guarantees that kids get enough nourishment, which benefits their development, growth, and general health.

Research has shown that mid-day meal programs have a positive effect on students' attendance rates. According to **Jha, Srinivasan, and Spears (2012)**, the introduction of midday meals in Indian schools considerably increased student attendance. They contend that feeding kids, particularly those from economically disadvantaged households, encourages them to go to school on a regular basis.

Similarly, it has been discovered that the establishment of mid-day meal programs has a good effect on student enrolment and attendance rates. According to **Swaminathan (2008)**, offering parents free meals encourages them to send their kids to school on a regular basis, which raises enrolment and lowers dropout rates

Additionally, it has been discovered that the MDM program has a beneficial impact on enrollment and attendance rates. According to a study by **Meir, Espejo, and Richter (2015)**, the provision of midday meals encourages families who are struggling with food insecurity to send their children to school, which in turn draws youngsters from underprivileged homes. **Banerjee, Deaton, and Duflo's (2004)** study also discovered that the MDM program dramatically increased kids' attendance rates, lowering absenteeism and dropout rates.

Studies on midday meal programs' effects on kids' academic performance have found that they are beneficial. In rural India, research by **Kremer et al. (2005)** discovered that mid-day meals improved pupils' cognitive functioning and academic results. The authors contend that regular mealtimes have a good impact on kids' focus, attentiveness, and general academic achievement.

Similarly, the effect of the MDM program on children's academic achievement has been examined in a number of research. According to a study by **Desai, Dubey, and Joshi (2010)**, children who got midday meals showed enhanced cognitive abilities and outperformed those who did not on standardized exams. According to the study, a healthy diet promoted improved focus and improved academic results.

Programs for midday meals have also been shown to have positive social effects. The provision of meals in schools, according to **Rajaraman and Kumar (2016)**, encourages social contact among kids from various socioeconomic backgrounds. The inclusion and social barrier-breaking effects of this connection support children's overall social development.

Additionally, in order to ensure that children from all socioeconomic levels have equal access to education and nourishment, midday meal programs support the promotion of

social equality. In order to ensure that children from underserved neighborhoods receive a hot, nourishing meal, these programs work to eliminate inequities **Roy et al., (2010)**.

Furthermore, the MDM program also has advantages for society. It fosters social integration among kids from all origins and fosters a sense of community. According to a study by **Jha, Saha, and Garg (2016)**, students of all castes, religions, and socioeconomic class benefit from eating together at school since it improves social connections, lessens prejudice and promotes inclusivity.

Programs that serve lunch to youngsters during the day may benefit their cognitive development, according to research. Having a healthy lunch during class time improves focus, memory, and learning skills, which boosts academic achievement **Biswal et al., (2014)**.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, India's mid-day meal program has shown to be an important intervention that has multiple advantages for kids, families, and the country as a whole. This project, which was created by a partnership between the government, non-profit organizations, and local communities, has made a huge influence on millions of people's lives. First, the children's health and nutrition have improved as a result of the midday meal program. It combats malnutrition and makes sure that kids get the nutrients they need for their physical and cognitive development by serving a balanced and nourishing meal. As a result, pupils' learning achievements have improved and rates of stunting and wasting have decreased. Additionally, the program has improved schooling. It has served as a potent incentive for kids, especially from economically disadvantaged households, to attend school frequently by providing free meals in schools. As a result, enrolment rates have increased, dropout rates have decreased, and a favorable learning environment has been encouraged. The lunchtime meal is also supplied to help youngsters who are hungry, allowing them to focus better on their schoolwork. The program for midday meals has also benefited socioeconomically. Using local women as chefs and helpers has empowered them economically and created job prospects. By obtaining food from nearby sources, the program also promotes regional agriculture, helping the rural economy. Last but not least, this effort has promoted equality and social solidarity. Every child receives the same food, regardless of caste, religion, or socioeconomic position, promoting inclusivity and dismantling obstacles. As kids from all backgrounds gather to share a meal, it encourages social integration and promotes tolerance. In conclusion, the India mid-day meal program, which was led by a variety of partners, has had significant advantages. It has benefited educational outcomes, stimulated local economies, aided social cohesiveness, and improved child nutrition and health. However, consistent funding, oversight, and evaluation are necessary to make sure it succeeds moving forward. India can keep making tremendous advancements in the direction of a society that is healthier, more educated, and inclusive by acknowledging and supporting the value of the mid-day meal programme.

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