

# Performance of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Schools in Kerala: A Micro Level Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20241273>

## ABSTRACT

One of the milestones of government of India's Educational policy is Midday Meal (MDM) scheme. It gave encouragement to children, especially of those belonging to poor families to come to schools and take part in the learning process without worrying for their meal. The program in the holistic manner helps in enhancing enrolment, attendance and retention of primary school children while simultaneously. The study was conducted with the objective of analyzing the satisfaction level of beneficiaries of Midday Meal Program, physical infrastructure of the concerned schools, its implementation, the various problems facing in the smooth functioning of the scheme. For the study and evaluation of Midday Meal Scheme in Kerala, three Government Schools in Thiruvananthapuram Education district was selected. The study and analysis found that a wide majority of the students are satisfied with the quality and quantity of Mid-Day Meal. It has been found that supply of food is helpful for students in their educational and physical wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Educational Policy, Midday Meal Programme

## INTRODUCTION

Mid-Day Meal scheme was initiated on the basis of the philosophy that "when children have to sit in class with empty stomach, they cannot focus on learning".<sup>6</sup> The Mid-

Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), also known as the Pradhan Mantri Poshan (PM-POSHAN) Scheme, is a program that provides free meals to children in government and government-aided schools in India. Mid-Day Meal Scheme was started in India on 15th August 1995 under the name 'National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education' (NP-NSPE). In October 2007, NP NSPE was renamed as National Programme of Mid-Day Meal in Schools." which is popularly known as Midday Meal Scheme. MDM involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in government, government aided and under the local body schools. The other objectives include improving nutritional status of children and encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend schools more regularly and help the enrolment, retention and attendance rates.

Malnourished children are likely to have lower IQ levels, impaired cognitive abilities, and perform poorly in School. By providing essential nutrients, the MDM Program helps improve learning outcomes that support brain development and academic performance. The school where there is sufficient and serving space has been observed to decor the time spent in the cooking, serving phase and in no way hamper the teaching learning method of the classroom.

MDM program not only helps to remove the classroom hunger but also provides employment opportunities to women from

disadvantaged sections strengthens the school- community linkage. The program has increased the socio- economic status of rural women. Some good habits and healthy practices among the school children are nurtured and social integration and solidarity among them are encouraged.<sup>10</sup> MDM is one of its best initiatives to bring changes in the field of education of the children. However, the effect on school education is unparalleled due to Covid-19. A significant. number of children have been affected across states, classes, caste, gender and regions. The dosing of schools and the decision to switch traditional classrooms to digital platforms not only exacerbate learning gaps among children, but also drive a large number of children out of school due to the digital divide. Apart from literacy, the lack of schooling will also have a long-lasting impact on children's health and nutrition. A survey in West Bengal found that child labour among school-going children increased by 105 percent during the pandemic.<sup>5</sup>

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study attempts to Evaluate the performance of MDM scheme and its effects on the beneficiaries in terms of access to the availability of quality food in schools. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been

collected with questionnaire and interview method which serves as the primary source: Secondary source include data from schools, published documents, journals, books and authorized internet websites Statistical tools such as averages and percentages are applied. For the study and evaluation of MDMS the three schools in Karamana cluster in Trivandrum district are selected. The selected schools are GGHSS Karamana, GBHSS Karamana and GHS Kalady. Response of 95 beneficiaries are collected on the whole. 30 from GHSS Karamana, 30 from GBHSS Karamana and 35 from GHS Kalady.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Government Boys HSS Karamana was established in 1974.The school consists of grades from 5 to 12. The government girls HSS Karamana consist of the classes from 5 to 12 and was established in 1974. The Government HS Kalady was established in 1972.The school has grades from 1 to 10 and have a good number of students. All the relevant data for the analysis was collected with the help of an interview schedule. It has two parts. Part A intended to collect basic information about the schools concerned and ‘B’ part is used for getting response from the beneficiaries of MDM Scheme.

Table 1: Beneficiaries of Midday meal scheme

Number of students up to HS Name of the institution	Total number of students			Beneficiaries of Midday Meal Scheme			
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Percentage
Govt Girls HSS Karamana	135	102	237	78	67	145	61.2%
Govt Boys Hss karamana	44	6	50	30	6	36	72%
Govt HS kalady	428	185	613	183	230	413	67.37%
Grand Total of Beneficiaries	607	293	900	291	303	594	66%

(Source: School records)

The table describes the strength of schools selected for study up to high School Standard and the beneficiaries of Midday Meal Scheme. Since the midday meal scheme is for children up to 8<sup>th</sup> standard, the number of beneficiaries of MDM scheme in the three schools are selected for the analysis. Out of 237 students of

Government Girls HSS Karamana 145 are getting midday meal in school, and in the Boys HSS Karamana, 36 are receiving Midday meal from school. GHS Kalady provides midday meal to 413 students out of 613. Out of the 900 students of the three schools 594 students are the beneficiaries of

the scheme since the school is for up to 8<sup>th</sup> standard students.

Most of the beneficiaries belong to the age group 9-12 who constitutes 69%, around 21% of the beneficiaries belong to the age group of 5-8 and a 10% of students come under the category of 13-14. Regarding the family status of the beneficiaries 86% belongs to nuclear family and 14% lives in joint families. While analyzing the data collected from the respondents it came to know that majority of the mothers are jobless. Only minimum number are govt. employees. There is equal number of parents working in private sectors and as

daily wage labourers. By examining the response of the beneficiaries regarding monthly family income 16% of the respondent have an annual income in the range of 2000-5000/-. 31.5% came from the families which have an income level between 5000 – 10000/- 42% of the beneficiaries have a moderate income. 10.5% came from sound economic family condition which have more than Rs. 20000/- income per month. While analyzing the income of the beneficiaries 47% of the students are from BPL category while 53% come from APL Categories.

**Table 2: Level of Satisfaction of the Beneficiaries of the MDM Regarding Quality**

Level of Satisfaction	No of respondent	Percentage
Good	85	89.5%
Average	8	8.4%
Below average	0	0%
No opinion	2	2.1%
Total	95	100%

(Source: Primary Data)

While analysing the Level of Satisfaction of the beneficiaries regarding MDM a wide majority admits that the food provided through MDM is good quality (89.5%). 8.4% opined that the food is average no one remarked it is below average. It reveals the necessity of MDM and approves the governments initiative of providing quality food to students. Children have various reasons for choosing MDM. 16% chooses MDM due to low family income 63% prefers it due to quality of food 21% became beneficiaries with no particular reasons. From the data analysis it is clear that 100% of the students have complete satisfaction about the quantity of food provided. Regarding cleanliness of the kitchen and other facilities only 10.5% made very good mark. A majority that is 52.6% approve it is good. 31.6% considers it is average. 5.3% gives below average mark. No one consider the facilities as very bad. While considering the nutritious level, 30% opined that if it includes more nutritious items the scheme will be more success. Respondents made mixed response about the timing of the lunch and a 42.10% of students opined the

lunch time is sufficient 52.63% of students demanded more time and 5.2% made no opinion.

## CONCLUSION

The present study is an attempt to evaluate the performance of MDM Scheme in general with particular reference to three schools of Karamana cluster of Thiruvananthapuram educational district. The areas consider for the analysis includes, number of children in the school, number of beneficiaries, economic status of the families of the respondents, satisfactory level of the quantity, quality and the nutritious level of food provided, cleanliness of the kitchen and the surrounding areas, duration of lunch time etc. One of the important findings is that 42% of the respondents are from the range of 1000-20000 per month. Only 10.5% are from sound economic family. It is worth to state that the quality of food provided under MDM meal is satisfactory. It proves the success of the MDM in ensuring the wellbeing of students. The study undoubtedly finds that 97.89% of the

respondents prefer midday meal from school. That means the school children consider it as a boon to them.

A crucial finding of the study is that while wide majority of the students are satisfied with the quality and quantity of MDM 31% demanded more nutritious food items must include in the MDM. So meals must include more nutritious food items like more vegetables, dry fruits etc. Continuation of the midday meal scheme is inevitable because 93% of the respondents prefer midday meal from school. So central government, state government and the local bodies must provide adequate funds for the scheme without delay. PTA has a major responsibility to ensure the smooth functioning of the MDM as 16% of the respondents prefer MDM due to low income of the families. School authorities must give maximum concentration on the cleanliness of kitchen and dining areas. 10.5% marked cleaning facilities as below average. So schools authorities and local bodies, PTA must ensure hygiene. Cook must use gloves; vessels must be properly cleaned. Kitchen and dining areas must be cleaned regularly. Pure drinking water facility must be ensured to the kids. Children are the supreme assets of the nation. It is not only the responsibility of government alone but the society also should work hand in hand with the government to ensure the smooth functioning of the system.

#### **Declaration by Author**

**Acknowledgement:** None

**Source of Funding:** None

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Resmi R S. Performance of mid-day meal scheme in schools in Kerala: a micro level study. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2024; 11(12): 670-673. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20241273>

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