

EDUCATIONAL NUTRITION OR ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN? A STUDY OF MDMS IN TELANGANA STATE

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study is to examine the problems and prospects of the Mid-day Meals Scheme in Siddipet district, India.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study employed a multi-stage sampling method. The primary data were collected during the 2018-19 academic year. Many of the schools have been facing various problems. Therefore, the government should consider providing an LPG connection to each school or implementing a solar cooking system to prevent further degradation of forests or vegetation.

Findings: Every school should have a kitchen shed with proper ventilation, adequate height, lighting, water supply, and storage facilities. The location of the kitchen shed should be away from the classrooms or out of sight, enabling students to focus on their education without distraction. Essential commodities like salt, chili, lentils, edible oil, and gas should be supplied by the government along with the food grains to the schools. This measure will reduce the total cost of the program. If drinking water contains unsafe levels of contaminants, it can cause health effects on students, such as gastrointestinal illnesses, nervous system disorders, and chronic diseases like cancer.

Practical Implications: Therefore, the government should provide safe drinking water to the students.

Originality/Value: It is concluded that the lack of clean water has serious effects on students' academic performance and attendance rates.

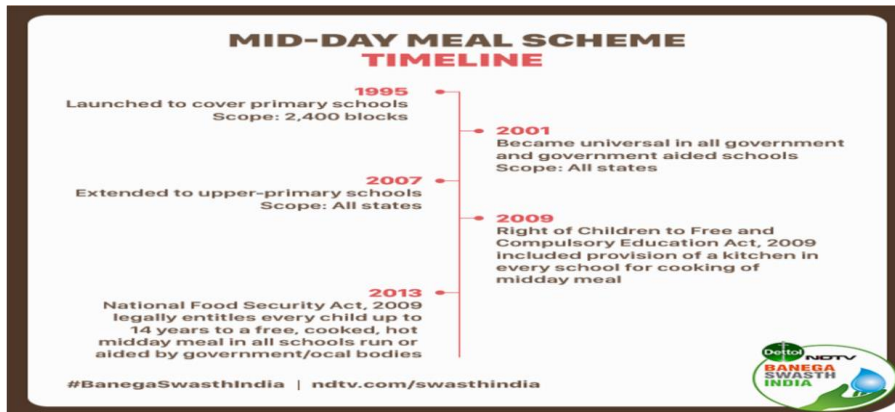
Keywords: Malnourish, Nutrient, School Management, Donors.

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in every aspect of society. It serves as the main instrument for disseminating the achievements of human civilization and is essential for maintaining civic order, fostering good citizenship, and contributing to the social, cultural, and economic development of a country. Education equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for societal and economic advancement.

Moreover, education is pivotal in maintaining higher living standards, promoting better health and nutrition, increasing productivity, fostering sustained economic growth, reducing poverty and social and economic inequality, and promoting good governance. Therefore, the multifaceted roles of education make it a key area of public policy in all developing countries.

Consequently, the Government of India launched the Mid-Day Meal Scheme to bolster the universalization of school education by enhancing enrollment and attendance while simultaneously improving the nutritional status and quality of food for students in primary and upper primary classes.



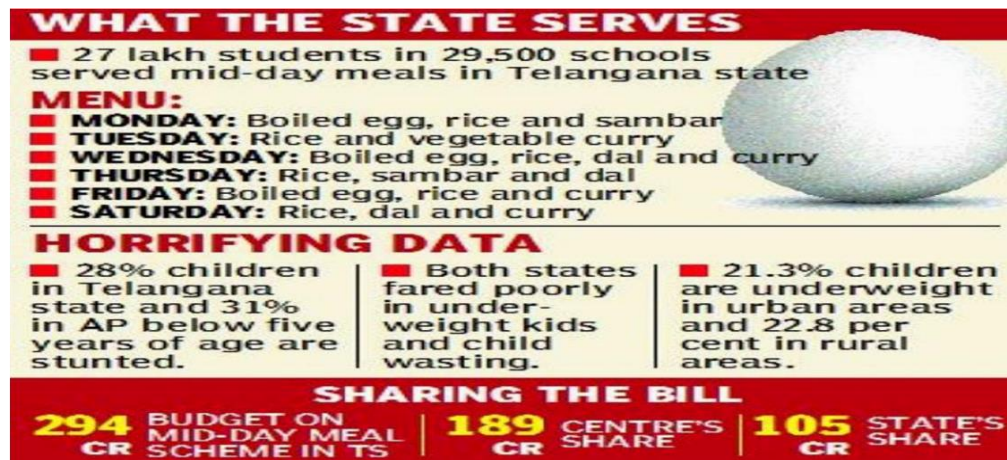
1. Importance of MMS Study

The Mid-Day Meal Program is the world's largest school feeding program, addressing the hunger of millions of students daily throughout the country. The

Government of India launched the Midday Meal Program on August 15, 1995, with the objective of universalizing education by increasing enrollment, attendance, and retention rates, while simultaneously improving the nutritional status of students in schools.

The Midday Meal Scheme is a pioneering initiative aimed at improving the education and nutritional status of underprivileged sections, particularly those in Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. It serves as an incentive to attract students to government schools. However, due to inadequate monitoring by higher officials and challenges in practical implementation, the scheme has not reached its full potential.

Previous studies have focused on the challenges and opportunities of the Midday Meal Scheme in various states. Consequently, there is a need for a comprehensive grassroots-level study on the challenges and opportunities of the scheme in Telangana State. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the challenges and opportunities of the Midday Meal Scheme in Siddipet District, Telangana State.



3. Objectives and Methodology

The aim of the study is to examine the problems and prospects of the Mid-day Meals Scheme in the sample area. Siddipet district has been purposively selected. For sample data collection, a multi-stage sampling method was employed. There are 22 mandals in Siddipet District, out of which two mandals (Maddur and Kondapak) were randomly selected. Five schools were then randomly selected from each mandal. In the present study, students are the main beneficiaries of the program. Therefore, 10 samples were collected from each school, resulting in a total sample size of 100.

All the sample students are from 8th, 9th, and 10th standard. Additionally, from each school, one parent, one cook, and one helper were considered to evaluate the problems. Thus, 30 samples were collected for this category. The primary data were collected during the 2018-19 academic year.

4. Results and Discussion

The drinking water facilities in the sample schools are outlined in Table 1. The researcher visited 10 sample schools where the main source of water was Government Borewells in 90.00 percent of the cases. Only one school relied on Government tap water as the main source, constituting 10.00 percent. Interestingly, no school in the study area uses filtered water for their students.

For drinking, cooking, and washing utensils, both Government Borewells and tap water are used directly in all 10 sample schools. It is concluded that the lack of clean water has serious effects on children's academic performance and attendance rates. Contaminated drinking water can lead to health issues in students, including gastrointestinal illnesses and chronic diseases such as cancer.

The availability of toilets for boys and girls in sample schools are presented in Table 2 It can be observed that all the sample schools have toilets in their schools. But, 50.00 percent of sample schools have their separate toilets for boys and girls and remaining 50.00 percent of the schools have not separate toilets for boys and girls. Therefore, female student and teachers are facing problem in this regards.

Table 1. Drinking Water Facility in the School

Sl. No.	Drinking Water facility	No. of the Schools	Percentage
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1	Govt. tap water directly used	1	10.00
2	Borewell water directly used	9	90.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

Table 2. Availability of Toilets for Boys and Girls in Sample Schools

Sl. No.	Toilets	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	Separate toilets for boys and girls	5	50.00
2	Not separate for boys and girls	5	50.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

The availability of kitchens for cooking of Midday Meal in sample schools is given in Table 3. It shows that only 20.00 percent of the sample schools have kitchen shed for cooking Midday Meal and 80.00 percent of the schools cooks Midday Meal in open place of their school premises. Therefore, the students are getting more problems while cooking and it is also a bad impact on their studies.

Table 3. Availability of Kitchen for Cooking of Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Cooking Place	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	Kitchen	2	20.00
2	Open place	8	80.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

Table 4 gives the information about cooking and serving utensils for Midday Meal in selected schools. It reveals that 90.00 percent of the sample schools have sufficient cooking utensils for Midday Meal and only 10.00 percent of the schools have not sufficient cooking utensils.

Table 4. Utensils for Midday Meal in the School

Sl. No.	Utensils Availability	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	Sufficient	9	90.00
2	Not sufficient	1	10.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

Table 5 presents the details about cooking fuel for Midday Meal in sample schools. It can be seen in the table that all (100 percent) the sample schools used firewood as fuel for cooking Midday Meal and firewood is common fuel in the rural areas in Telangana. No sampleschool is using cooking gas for cooking midday meal because it is expensive. That is why most of the sample schools in study area prefer firewood as cooking fuel which is easily found in the locality.

Table 5. Cooking Fuel for Midday Meal in the School

Sl. No.	Cooking Fuel	No. of the Schools	Percentage
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1	Firewood	10	100.00
2	Gas	0	0
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

Table 6 shows the information of dining hall for distribution of Midday Meal in schools. It reveals that no sample school have separate dining place for distribution of Midday Meal in the study area.

Table 6. Dining Hall for Distribution of Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Dining Hall	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	Yes	- -	- -
2	No	10	100.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

The availability of store rooms in sample schools is presented in Table 7. It can be found from Table 7 that only 30.00 percent of the sample schools have store rooms to storage of foodgrains and the remaining 70.00 percent of the schools do not have store rooms in the study area.

Table 7. Availability of Store Room in the School

Sl. No.	Store Room	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	Yes	3	30.00
2	No	7	70.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

The availability of Cook/Helpers for Midday Meal is shown in Table 8. It is observed that 90.00 percent of the sample schools have 1 cook and 1 helper and only 10.00 percent of the schools have 2 cooks & no helper in the study area.

Table 8. Availability of Cook/Helpers for Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Cook/Helpers	No. of the Schools	Percentage
1	1 Cook & Helper	9	90.00
2	2 Cooks	1	10.00
	Total	10	100

Source: Field study.

4. Perceptions

Teachers are the functionaries of the Midday Meal Scheme. They are responsible for the implementation of majority of the aspects of the MDM scheme. Receiving and storage of food grains, condiments to supervision of cooking and serving of meals, maintenance of records and handling of medical emergency in case of school accidents while cooking or serving meals are some of important responsibilities. Thus, their feedback is significant.

With regard to the question whether the funds provided by Government is sufficient to provide food quality food for the children. For this 90.00 percent of the respondents say that it is sufficient while only 10.00 percent of them opined 'no', because they do not have kitchen garden and no support from the SDMC members. Their opinion of the teacher about the funds provided is sufficient to ensure quality food is shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Perception of the Teacher about the Funds provided is Sufficient to Ensure Quality Food

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Teachers	Percentage
1	Yes	18	90.00
2	No	2	10.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

The infrastructure facilities are more important to implement Midday Meal scheme. The opinion of teachers about sufficient infrastructure for MDM is given in Table 10. It is observed that 70 percent of the teachers say that infrastructure like kitchen, utensils, storage etc., is available is sufficient while 30.00 percent of them opined that the infrastructure to keep kitchen items available is not adequate.

Table 10. Opinion about Sufficient Infrastructure for Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Teachers	Percentage
1	Yes	14	70.00
2	No	6	30.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

There is always a complaint that the foodgrains supplied by Food Corporation of India (FCI) are not good quality but often it is claimed that they supply good quality for Midday Meal. The opinion about the rating on quality of the food grains supplied for MDM is presented in Table 11. It is observed that 10.00 percent of the teachers opined that the quality of food grains supplied for MDM is very good while 15.00 percent of them reported that it is good only. It is also observed that 75.00 percent of the beneficiaries replied that it is of average quality while only 5.00 percent of the teachers responded that the quality of the food grains received for MDM is of poor quality.

Table 11. Opinion about the Rating on Quality of the Foodgrains Supplied for Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Teachers	Percentage
1	Very good	2	10.00
2	Good	3	15.00
3	Average	15	79.67
4	Poor	1	5.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

The quality of food provided to the school students is one of the most important tasks in Midday Meal Scheme. The perception of the teachers about the quality of food of MDM is presented in Table 12. It is observed that 50.00 percent of the teachers opined that the quality of food is good while 35.00 percent of them have reported that it is average. It is also observed that 10.00 percent of the beneficiaries said that it is poor quality whereas only 5.00 percent of the teachers responded that the quality of the food is very good.

Table 12. Perception of the Teachers about the Quality of Food Provided under Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Teachers	Percentage
1	Very good	1	5.00
2	Good	10	50.00
3	Average	7	35.00
4	Poor	2	10.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

The next factor which manipulates the attendance as well as enrolment in schools is the quality of the Midday Meals. The data mentioned in Table 13 indicates that 43.33 percent of the children have admitted that the quality of the meal is very good whereas 34.67 percent of the students express that the quality of the meal is healthy. Hence, out of 300 students, 78 percent students have responded that the quality of the meal is good and only 22 percent of students replied that the quality is poor.

Table 13. Opinion of the Students about Quality of the Meal

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Students	Percentage
1	Very good	130	43.33
2	Good	104	34.67
3	Poor	66	22.00
	Total	300	100

Source: Field survey.

The opinion of students about hand-wash facility after eating in the school is presented in Table 14. It reveals that 96.67 percent of the students' pinioned that there is handwash facility in the sample school premises while only 3.33 percent of them said that there is no hand-wash facility in their schools.

Table 14. Opinion of Students about Hand-washFacility after Eating in the School

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Students	Percentage
1	Yes	290	96.67
2	No	10	3.33
	Total	300	100

Source: Field Survey.

The students are facing some problems while eating, washing their utensils after they eat and using washrooms in the time implementing Midday Meal Scheme. The problems faced by them in implementing MDM are given in Table 15. It reveals that 54.67 percent of the students opinioned that the sufficient water was not available in the schools to drink as well as to wash the utensils and 45.33 percent of them responded that there are not proper washroom facilities for boy and girls in the school.

Table 15. Problems Faced by Students in Midday Meal

Sl. No.	Problems	No. of the Teachers	Percentage
1	Poor drinking water facility	164	54.67
2	Lack of toilet facility	136	45.33
	Total	300	100

Source: Field survey.

Table 16 shows the information of perception of cooks and helpers about teacher's involvement in cooking process. It can be seen from Table 16 that only 10.00 percent of the cooks and helpers replied that the teachers are involved in the process of cooking while 90.00 percent of them responded that no teachers are involved in cooking process.

Table 16. Perception of Cooks and Helpers about Teacher's Involvement in Cooking Process

Sl. No.	Teachers Involvement	No. of the Cooks & Helpers	Percent
1	Yes	2	10.00
2	No	18	90.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

The perceptions of cooks and helpers about the cooking cost provided by the government are shown in Table 17. The government of Telangana has been providing cooking cost Rs.7 per child per day. According to majority of cooks and helpers (95.00 percent), the cooking cost provided by the government is not sufficient. Only 5.00 percent of the beneficiaries replied that the cooking cost is sufficient in the study area.

Table 17. Perceptions of Cooks and Helpers about the Cooking Cost Provided by the Government

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Cooks & Helpers	Percent
1	Sufficient	1	5.00
2	Not Sufficient	19	95.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

The opinions of cooks and helpers about the releasing of cooking cost by the government in time are presented in Table 18. It reveals that 90.00 percent of the cooks and helpers reported that the government

is not releasing cooking cost in time while only 10.00 percent of the respondents replied that the government is not releasing cooking cost in time in the study area.

Table 18. Opinion of Cooks and Helpers about the Releasing of Cooking Cost by Government in Time

Sl. No.	Response	No. of the Cooks & Helpers	Percent
1	Release in time	2	10.00
2	Not release in time	18	90.00
	Total	20	100

Source: Field survey.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The present study focuses on the Midday Meals Scheme in Siddipet district of Telangana state. The Mid-Day Meal Program is the world's largest school children feeding program, catering to the hunger of millions of students across the country every day. The scheme addresses various aspects including infrastructure, enrollment, attendance, dropout rates, nutritional status, implementation of the MDM Scheme, and the opinions and involvement of functionaries and beneficiaries in schools.

School teachers play a crucial role as observers and functionaries in the Midday Meals Scheme, being responsible for its implementation. They examine various issues related to infrastructure, program implementation, and other arrangements, ensuring the quality and quantity of food, and assessing the scheme's impact on the academic environment of the students.

Midday Meal Scheme in-charges are also vital functionaries responsible for overseeing the majority of aspects of the program. Their duties include receiving and storing food grains, supervising cooking and meal service, maintaining records, and handling medical emergencies in case of school accidents occurring during meal preparation or service.

Students are the primary and ultimate beneficiaries of the Midday Meal Program. They are the driving force behind the implementation of the Midday Meal Scheme. Their opinions, views, and the problems they face are crucial for the success of the scheme.

The drinking water facility in the sample schools is provided. The researcher visited 10 sample schools, where the main (90.00 percent) source of water was Government Borewells. Only in one school was the main (10.00 percent) source of water Government tap water. Interestingly, no school in the study area uses filtered water for their students.

For drinking, cooking, and washing utensils, these Government Borewells and Tap water are used directly in all the 10 sample schools. It is concluded that the lack of clean water has serious effects on children's academic performance and attendance rates. Contaminants in drinking water can cause health effects in students, such as gastrointestinal illnesses and chronic diseases like cancer.

The availability of toilets for boys and girls in sample schools is presented. It can be observed that all the sample schools have toilets. The availability of kitchens for cooking Midday Meals in sample schools is also provided.

It shows that only 20.00 percent of the sample schools have a kitchen shed for cooking the Midday Meal, while 80.00 percent of the schools cook the Midday Meal in an open place on their school premises. Consequently, students face more difficulties during cooking, which also impacts their studies.

Information about cooking and serving utensils for the Midday Meal in selected schools is provided. None of the sample schools are using cooking gas for preparing the Midday Meal due to its high cost. Therefore, most of the sample schools in the study area prefer firewood as a cooking fuel, which is easily available locally.

Details about the dining hall for the distribution of the Midday Meal in schools are given. It is revealed that none of the sample schools have a separate dining area for distributing the Midday Meal in the study area. The availability of store rooms in sample schools is also presented. It is found that only 30.00 percent of the sample schools have store rooms for storing food grains, while the remaining 70.00 percent do not have store rooms in the study area.

Teachers serve as functionaries of the Midday Meal Scheme and are responsible for implementing the majority of its aspects. From receiving and storing food grains to supervising the cooking and serving of meals, maintaining records, and handling medical emergencies in case of accidents during meal preparation or service, they shoulder important responsibilities. Therefore, their feedback is significant.

The views and opinions of teachers regarding the Midday Meal Scheme were studied by selecting a sample of 20 teachers (including headmasters and MDM incharges) working in Zilla Parishad High Schools of Siddipet District. The results have been discussed in the following paragraphs.

Regarding the question of whether the funds provided by the Government are sufficient to provide quality food for the children, 90.00 percent of the respondents stated that it is sufficient, while only 10.00 percent opined 'no,' citing reasons such as the absence of a kitchen garden and lack of support from SDMC members.

The perception of teachers regarding the drinking water facility in the sample schools is provided. It indicates that 85.00 percent of the teachers reported that the main source of water was Government Borewells, while only 15.00 percent stated that the source of water was Government tap. Interestingly, no school in the study area uses filtered water for their students.

For drinking, cooking, and washing utensils, these Government Borewells and tap water are used directly in all the sample schools. It is concluded that the lack of clean water has more serious effects on children's academic performance and attendance rates. Contaminated drinking water can cause health issues in students, such as gastrointestinal illnesses, nervous system disorders, and chronic diseases like cancer.

Suggestions from the study include: the Government should provide LPG connections to each school or solar cooking systems to prevent further degradation of forests or vegetation. Additionally, every school

should have a kitchen shed with proper ventilation, height, lighting, water supply, and storage facilities. The location of the kitchen shed should be away from the classrooms or not visible from them, enabling students to focus on their education rather than observing kitchen activities.

Every essential commodity such as salt, chili, lentils, edible oil, gas, etc., should be supplied by the government along with the food grains to the schools. This process will reduce the total cost of the program. Government boreholes and tap water are used directly in the schools for drinking, cooking, and washing utensils.

It is concluded that the lack of clean water has serious effects on students' academic performance and attendance rates. Contaminated drinking water can cause health issues in students, including gastrointestinal illnesses, nervous system disorders, and chronic diseases such as cancer. Therefore, the government should provide safe drinking water to the students.

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