

Indonesia's First Makanan Bergizi Gratis Starting in 2025-2026: Case Studies in Class of Supply Chain Management

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's Makanan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) program, or Free Nutritious Meals (FNM), which was introduced by President Prabowo Subianto in 2025, basically sits as a huge public welfare effort meant to give free nutritious meals to about 82–83 million people, mostly school age children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers. The program is not only about tackling malnutrition and child stunting, it is a strategic national policy tool meant to push economic growth, modernize the food supply chain, and form stronger human capital. In this paper, a qualitative case study approach is used so MBG is looked at like an operational, plus public sector management problem, by reviewing policy documents, program records, and what international school feeding practices usually look like. The results show that even though the program has huge potential to improve national nutrition and to strengthen local economies, its implementation still gets slowed down by systemic risks. Those risks include food safety weak points, budget inefficiencies, governance breakdowns, and distribution obstacles across Indonesia's archipelago, which is not a small thing at all. The study then concludes that for MBG to stay viable in the long run, it needs to move away from fully universal coverage toward a semi-targeted fiscal allocation model, plus it has to create strict multi-layer governance and run integrated digital monitoring. MBG is really a complicated national systems matter, so it needs centralized standards while local areas carry out execution in a more decentralized way in order to push inclusive development that actually reaches everyone.

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INTRODUCTION

The MBG program in Indonesia which translates to Free Nutritious Meals stands as the most extensive public welfare program which develops human capital according to current Indonesian governmental policy. President Prabowo Subianto officially introduced MBG in 2025, as a national school feeding program and maternal nutrition push, aimed at reducing malnutrition and also lowering child stunting while building human capital in Indonesia (Ludher & Nasution, 2024; Okada, 2025). Right now, the initiative serves around 82 to 83 million people, meaning preschool and high school students together with pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, so it becomes one of the biggest school meal arrangements you can find anywhere internationally.

MBG matters to the national government in a strategic way, because the nutritional goal does not just stop at immediate benefits. It also produces economic spillovers that go further than the first outcome you see in the field. The whole setup was made to answer Indonesia's long running malnutrition issue, particularly child stunting, which still touches about 21.5% of children under five years old (Colozza et al., 2024; UNICEF, 2024). Stunting is not only a health matter; it links to persistent public health problems and it can shape cognitive development for the long term, which then connects to education results, workforce productivity, and even how well a country shows up on the global stage. In that sense MBG is doing more than just feeding people, it acts as a long horizon investment for the future workforce, and for economic steadiness (Mulyani et al., 2025).

The government also framed MBG as a national program with two separate aims, as described in its policy structure (Suprpto et al., 2025). First, the policy is supposed to ensure nutritious meals reach all children plus vulnerable mothers, which should improve nutritional well-being while supporting school attendance. Second, MBG is treated as a macroeconomic instrument, it boosts domestic purchasing power and also helps agricultural production and creates employment across the food supply chain. Of course, the funding side is heavy, since the government pledged Rp. 71 trillion for the first year, and it expects to allocate about

Rp. 450 trillion over the next five years (Anjani et al., 2025). MBG is also a social initiative, but it works like a fiscal and development lever, influencing economic growth and the structure of public finances and even rural development activities, in a way that is fairly direct.

MBG operates at an extensive level with ambitious goals which make it suitable for researching operational methods and supply chain management practices (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026). Indonesian archipelagic geography creates a logistical challenge which involves delivering millions of meals across its extensive and fragmented territory (Dany, 2026). The program requires systems which operate together to manage procurement processes and control food safety and coordinate supplier activities and establish cold-chain systems and regional distribution networks and monitor operations through real-time systems (Gulshan, 2026; Occupational Safety and Health Standards, 1996). MBG serves as a nutrition case study while it creates a public operations challenge which requires governance systems and logistics systems and execution systems to produce successful policy outcomes (Berlianto et al., 2026).

MBG shows major structural problems which have emerged during its initial implementation phase despite its positive potential (Mardianti, 2025; Sutar et al., 2026); (a) the first reports indicate that food safety issues and logistic delays and food quality differences between regions and the possibility of budget cuts and corruption and the danger of fiscal instability have occurred, (b) the program faces operational challenges which arise from food poisoning and undercooked meals and fraudulent charges that occurred during trial periods because it lacks sufficient institutional protections, and (c) the program universal design system has created fiscal efficiency problems because it permits subsidy distribution to higher-income households while deep nutritional shortages continue in vulnerable regions.

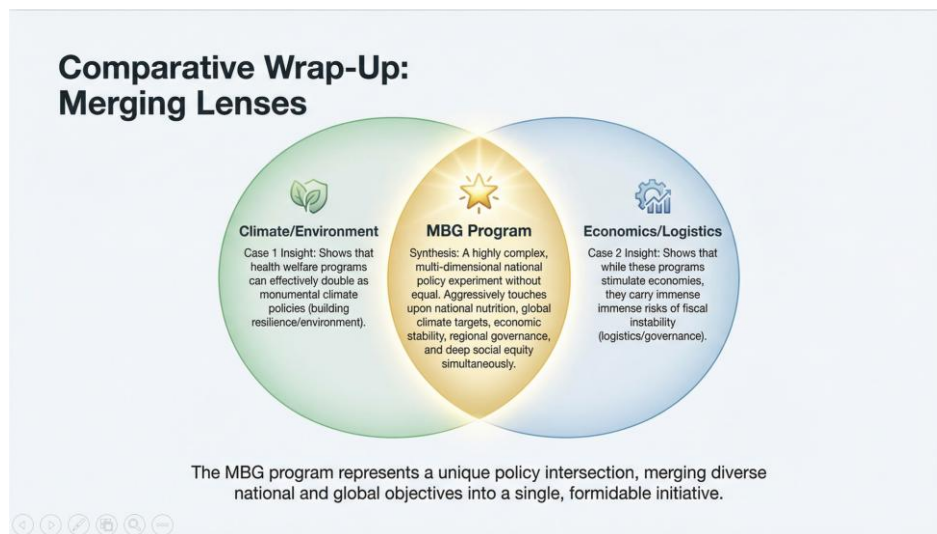
The strategic evaluation of MBG becomes essential because the two opposing forces create conflicts which need resolution (Maruapey et al., 2025; Suprpto et al., 2025). The program connects public health systems with fiscal policy governance

structures and supply chain operations. The research demonstrates that large-scale welfare programs create revolutionary development outcomes but weak institutional design results in policy implementation problems. The developing country context of MBG serves as a case study that shows how public sector operations need to achieve social equity and financial sustainability and accountability for governance and operational effectiveness.

The study examines MBG as a national case study

which investigates operational and governance issues that affect implementation. The analysis demonstrates that the long-term success of MBG relies on policy goals and policy execution through governance networks which control fiscal design and supply chain systems and monitoring mechanisms. The study assesses whether Indonesia's flagship nutrition program can develop into a sustainable national development model through its analysis of three operational dimensions.

Figure 1. Comparative Merging Lenses



Source: (Ludher & Nasution, 2024; Okada, 2025)

LITERATURE STUDY

MBG in the Context of Public Welfare and Nutrition Policy

The MBG program exists as a school feeding program research study which examines the impacts of nutrition-sensitive social protection methods and public welfare programs in developing countries. School feeding programs function as strategic instruments which enable policy makers to combat child malnutrition while increasing access to education and developing human capital for future needs (Pancani & Ningsih, 2025; Rasyid et al., 2025). These programs hold special importance for lower- and middle-income countries because their citizens experience both nutritional deprivation and educational inequality which stems from their structural poverty

problems (Alwan et al., 2023; Bird et al., 2019). MBG serves as Indonesia's current effort to create a large-scale nutrition initiative through a government-operated school meal and maternal feeding program.

School feeding programs create multiple developmental benefits which extend beyond their basic nutritional benefits. Research shows that well-designed school meal programs lead to better student attendance while decreasing short-term hunger and enhancing classroom concentration which results in better educational results (Mohammed et al., 2023; Vogelzang, 2025). The macro-economic impacts of this study show that worker productivity grows while citizens become healthier and their human capital development creates long-term advantages (Tomba, 2002). The school feeding program functions as an investment

project which supports national development instead of being just a welfare distribution program. Nutritional provision through MBG functions as a policy mechanism which helps achieve national goals that include stunting reduction and education support and workforce development.

Nutrition Policy and Child Stunting

The literature about MBG shows that its main focus deals with how nutrition policies affect child stunting rates. Public health and development studies describe child stunting as the most enduring and harmful type of chronic malnutrition. Stunting causes physical growth delays which also result in lesser cognitive development and educational success and decreased immune system abilities and adult work output (Colozza et al., 2024; UNICEF, 2024). Stunting exists as a public health problem in developing nations while also acting as a barrier that limits their economic progress (Rasyid et al., 2025; Suprpto et al., 2025).

Indonesia has maintained serious stunting problems throughout its history since about 21.5% of children under five years old still experience this condition (Agushybana et al., 2025; Bahrin & Wildan, 2022). The national policy environment of MBG requires nutritional intervention because it serves both social needs and economic needs of the country. Research shows that early nutritional intervention through school-based and maternal feeding programs functions as the most successful method to decrease stunting while enhancing long-term development results. The evidence shows that MBG targets school-aged children and maternal nutrition to fight malnutrition during vital periods of human development (Milwan & Sunarya, 2023).

School Feeding Programs as Instruments of Human Capital Development

The literature on school feeding programs increasingly frames such interventions as human capital investments rather than purely redistributive welfare programs. Human capital theory demonstrates that childhood nutritional investments lead to better labor productivity and learning outcomes while national economic

competitiveness improves (Anantadjaya, 2009; Dinku et al., 2024). This perspective applies primarily to emerging economies like Indonesia which need both nutritional and educational investments to convert their demographic advantage into economic productivity (Fernandes, 2018; Locke et al., 2025).

The MBG program operates as a developmental welfare system which permits social spending through equity concerns and productivity and economic growth objectives (Malambo et al., 2025). School feeding programs function as long-term economic policy instruments which produce permanent benefits for countries through their school feeding programs. The Indonesian policy framework identifies MBG as a national initiative which supports human capital development and economic transformation efforts (Berlianto et al., 2026; Pancani & Ningsih, 2025).

Governance and Public Sector Delivery

The main body of research which relates to MBG investigates how governance affects public sector execution of projects. The results from research studies about extensive welfare initiatives demonstrate that policy goals do not determine program success because successful implementation depends on the quality of governance and the effectiveness of institutional coordination and accountability systems and monitoring capacity (Kampen et al., 2006; Maruapey et al., 2025; Padhy & Swar, 2011). The literature establishes that governance failures which include corruption and insufficient oversight and divided administrative functions and weak accountability mechanisms serve as the main reasons for welfare program inefficiency and failure.

The MBG program requires this perspective because its operational activities and program size create a requirement for complex operational systems. The research literature about public administration shows that large-scale welfare interventions experience their highest risk for governance failure when their implementation systems lack effectiveness and their operational processes lack proper coordination (Berlianto et al., 2026). The initial MBG execution reports which

show food safety violations and school charge fraud and inconsistent meal quality reflect the governance patterns which scholars have established link to institutional control weaknesses instead of policy design flaws. The literature establishes that governance functions as an essential component which determines the success of MBG operations (Dany, 2026).

Fiscal Sustainability and Welfare Program Design

The primary focus of another research area studies how universal welfare programs affect government fiscal capacity (Chang & Hu, 2021). Welfare economics literature shows that politicians prefer to implement social programs through universal benefits which create financial problems because of their unregulated social program delivery system. Universal program design enhances legitimacy and political backing, but it creates major budget waste problems in situations where resources exist in limited amounts (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026).

The MBG debate requires special attention because the organization implements a national coverage system while poverty and nutritional risk and fiscal need show major regional differences across the country. The study of targeted welfare systems together with semi-targeted welfare systems shows that programs achieve better results when they provide benefits based on both socioeconomic vulnerability and regional risk factors (Papachashvili et al., 2023). The fiscal prioritization together with cost efficiency practices and strategic resource distribution practices in public welfare systems showed through MBG's ongoing policy discussion about semi-targeting in this case (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026).

Supply Chain and Operations in School Feeding Systems

The research food establishments must treat both their operational activities and their policy framework implementation when they assess their program success. Supply chain management research shows that school feeding programs achieve their goals through five essential

components which include procurement systems, logistics coordination, supplier integration, cold-chain capacity, and food safety assurance (Kretschmer et al., 2013). The research proves that feeding systems need intensive operational resources while their supply chain activities become highly exposed to disruptions that impact their transportation and storage and quality control operations (Agarwal et al., 2023; Fauzan & Sudrajat, 2025).

MBG requires this perspective because Indonesia's geography creates its own logistical challenges for the organization. The delivery of millions of meals which occurs every day across an archipelago, results in significant operational hazards which surpass the typical challenges found in welfare policies. The operations and supply chain management field provides essential tools for MBG analysis because it helps researchers study procurement efficiency and local sourcing and last-mile delivery and quality assurance operations (Satriawan & Nugroho, 2025; Suprpto et al., 2025; Wangge & Idris, 2025).

Comparative International Literature on School Feeding Systems

International benchmarks that schools use to check how well their feeding programs do, often show effective ways of measuring MBG performance via comparative literature studies. A few countries also give policy lessons that are fairly clear. For example, the Brazilian Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) framework asks schools to purchase food from local suppliers, and this makes openings so smaller farmers can work with schools, because the local buying rule is legally mandatory (Da Silva et al., 2023; Elias et al., 2026). India's school feeding system, in a similar way, offers lessons on scale, decentralization, and food safety oversight (Chakrabarti et al., 2021; Kaur, 2021). Ghana and Kenya show methods that help municipalities buy goods but still keep their funding stable, lasting for many years. Taiwan meanwhile highlights how transparent public scorecards can work, along with supplier accountability. Mexico and the Philippines then bring up tiered welfare targeting, and also dynamic beneficiary reassessment (Asirifi et al., 2025).

When you look across the comparative literature, it suggests school feeding systems that actually work tend to rely on a bundle of essential parts, like solid legal grounding, sturdy governance, integration with local supply chains, adaptive targeting, transparent monitoring, and institutional accountability (Irizarry et al., 2025). For the MBG program, Indonesia will need to develop a welfare distribution arrangement as a national delivery backbone, and this should support resilience, plus adaptability (Satriawan & Nugroho, 2025; Suprpto et al., 2025).

Research Gap

The international research literature contains extensive studies for school feeding programs and nutrition policies and welfare governance systems, yet there exists a research gap for MBG because the program started operating recently (Cha et al., 2008). The current research about MBG focuses mainly on policy matters and program descriptions and operational procedures, while academic studies about the program's complete governance and supply chain operation remain scarce (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026; Suprpto et al., 2025; Wangge & Idris, 2025).

The MBG framework for nutrition policy and public governance and fiscal design and operations management creates a research gap that this manuscript addresses. The emerging literature establishes MBG as a nutritional intervention and a contemporary public administration system which governs complex governmental systems (Ludher & Nasution, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The research uses a qualitative case study method to study Indonesia's MBG program which functions as a major public policy and operational management system. The study uses qualitative research methods because it aims to study the complete structural and institutional and operational aspects of MBG which requires governance logic and implementation design and policy trade-offs and institutional coordination to be analyzed instead of numeric performance results (Jagustović et al., 2019; Yin, 2009). The new national program implementation of MBG requires

qualitative assessment because it enables deeper understanding of program design and governance and operation processes within Indonesia's socioeconomic and administrative system.

Research Design

The study employs descriptive exploratory research methods to investigate its research questions through case study investigation. The case study method is selected because MBG represents a contemporary national policy phenomenon involving multiple stakeholders, institutional systems, and operational dimensions. Through this approach, the manuscript seeks to understand how MBG functions as both a nutrition intervention and a public sector operational system.

The descriptive component of the study focuses on documenting the structure, objectives, and implementation mechanisms of MBG, including its (a) policy framework, (b) governance systems, (c) procurement mechanisms, and (d) distribution processes. The exploratory phase of the research examines four main areas which include (a) operational risks, (b) governance weaknesses, (c) financial issues, and (d) supply chain problems that affect program performance.

The research design allows researchers to study MBG by using multiple research approaches which include public policy and governance and welfare economics and operations and supply chain management.

Qualitative Review Approach

The research paper employs a document analysis method to conduct its qualitative review through the process of interpretive synthesis (Usman et al., 2025). The research team conducted their study of MBG via a sort of comprehensive scan of policy documents and program materials, plus institutional records and existing work about school feeding and public welfare management (Ostlund et al., 2020). The qualitative review method is especially suitable because; MBG is a newly rolled out national program so the long-term quantitative output data is kind of limited, the program includes multifaceted institutional

linkages, which is more realistically understood through contextual analysis not just plain metrics, and an interpretive evaluation is also needed for operational and governance concerns, because these matters tend to demand more than statistical assessment.

Overall the study leans toward analytical depth and situational understanding, rather than statistical generalization (Anantadjaya & Nawangwulan, 2018). This is the difference between quantitative research, which aims at statistical generalization, and qualitative research, which focuses on contextual comprehension.

Data Sources

The manuscript relies on secondary qualitative data, which the author seemed to collect from a variety of essential sources. These sources, in the research, draw from three main document categories, and you can see the materials cover government documents and academic journals, plus supply chain management studies and evaluation materials. There are also international school feeding system references and classroom observation materials, even if the way they are presented feels a bit uneven at points.

The presentation sessions themselves were not just slides, but more like collaborative discussion, policy critique, and strategic recommendation development, tied to MBG governance, supply chain resilience, and fiscal sustainability. The study seems to get a more grounded contextual understanding through the presentation observations, because they show what is basically real academic interpretation of time-based events, and group policy development work, including (Fusté-Forné & Masip, 2018); (a) government and policy documents connected to MBG implementation, fiscal allocation, nutrition targets, and program governance, (b) academic journals and policy literature on school feeding programs, child nutrition welfare policy and public sector governance, (c) operations, together with supply chain management analyses about food logistics, procurement systems, distribution bottlenecks, and food safety, (d) presentation materials and institutional case study discussions that were developed during the MBG program evaluation

process, (e) comparative international references from countries using similar school feeding arrangements, such as Brazil, India, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Taiwan and the Philippines, and (f) visual and presentation driven observations that came out of classroom case study discussions, and strategic recommendation presentations made during the MBG evaluation process.

Data Collection Technique

Research activities used three methods to gather data which included document analysis, literature review, and observational research. The researchers selected materials through deliberate selection because those materials directly matched both the MBG program requirements and study objectives. The document review process involved; (a) identifying relevant literature and policy documents, (b) reviewing program implementation reports, (c) analyzing operational and governance frameworks, and (d) compiling strategic recommendations and implementation critiques.

Researchers collected observational data from academic presentation sessions which examined the MBG case study. The discussions at these sessions included; (a) operational and supply chain management, (b) governance and accountability systems, (c) fiscal sustainability strategies, (d) climate-resilient procurement, (e) AI-based monitoring systems, and (f) decentralized implementation models.

The presentation materials also showed how students worked together to analyze strategic options for MBG policy pathways and implementation recommendations.

Data Analysis Technique

The study uses thematic content analysis as its main qualitative analysis method. Thematic analysis enables researchers to identify recurring themes and patterns while examining institutional problems which arise from the document review and observational material study. The analysis process included three main stages which researchers followed to reach their final results;

- The first step in data analysis involved researchers decreasing the amount of information they had to work with. Researchers selected all essential information about MBG governance and logistics operations and fiscal policy development and implementation difficulties which they then organized into specific categories.
- Thematic Coding - the collected data were organized into major analytical themes which included six fundamental analytical categories. Thematic analysis established 6 main themes which researchers used to analyze (a) governance and transparency, (b) fiscal sustainability, (c) supply chain resilience, (d) food safety and quality control, (e) public accountability and digital monitoring systems, (f) local procurement and regional implementation.
- Thematic content analysis enables researchers to find relationships between different code themes while they examine structural components and policy conflicts and operational weaknesses and strategic possibilities which exist in the implementation of MBG programs.
- The researchers used comparative data analysis to examine how MBG program results correlated with international school feeding program data in order to find applicable insights and policy recommendations which would benefit Indonesia.

Analytical Framework

The text uses 3 different methods of analysis to interpret the manuscript's content;

- The Public Policy Perspective examines MBG as a government-led welfare program which aims to enhance nutrition and education and promote social equity.
- The Governance Perspective examines how national and regional organizations maintain institutional accountability and transparency through their monitoring systems and implementation coordination efforts.
- The Operations and Supply Chain Perspective examine how MBG operates by studying its procurement systems and food distribution networks and supplier integration and

logistics management and operational resilience.

The study uses multiple perspectives to analyze MBG as both a feeding program and a comprehensive system for governance and operational functions.

Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

The research uses multiple qualitative validation methods, which include three methods to achieve methodological rigor and study credibility (Ahmed, 2024; Vivek et al., 2023); (a) the first method uses source triangulation to compare research results from policy documents and academic literature and program reports and presentation discussions, (b) the second method uses multiple sources to identify governance and operational issues that appear across different categories of documents, (c) the third method uses contextual interpretation to ensure that research findings about Indonesia stay tied to the country's institutional framework and development context, and (d) the fourth method uses comparative validation to show how MBG research results compare with international school feeding program data. The research methods increase the trustworthiness of qualitative results while providing deeper analytical insights.

Research & Methodological Limitation

The research study depends on secondary qualitative data which creates a limitation because it lacks primary field interviews and direct beneficiary surveys. The early implementation stage of MBG prevents researchers from accessing complete long-term outcome data. The manuscript examines program design and governance systems and operational viability and strategic implementation difficulties instead of measuring quantitative impacts. The qualitative review method remains suitable for assessing MBG as a public policy study and operational case study during its initial implementation period despite the existing study limitations.

The research study encounters limitations because it depends on secondary qualitative data without conducting primary empirical fieldwork which includes interviews and direct observation and

beneficiary-level assessment. Verified long-term performance data remains unavailable because MBG has not yet reached its complete implementation stage. The manuscript presents its focus through three elements which include policy design and implementation logic and operational feasibility assessment instead of evaluating program results. The qualitative case study method effectively captures the strategic and institutional and operational aspects of MBG during its early development stage despite this research limitation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative review reveals that Indonesia's MBG program is a strategically significant but operationally fragile national intervention. The findings demonstrate that MBG achieves its policy goals and development potential because its success depends on governance quality operational discipline fiscal prioritization and institutional coordination (Satriawan & Nugroho, 2025; Suprpto et al., 2025). The results show that MBG should be understood not merely as a nutrition program but as a complex public service delivery system whose success depends on the alignment of policy design and implementation capability (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026).

1. MBG Is a High-Impact but High-Risk Public Intervention

The findings suggests that MBG has a rather huge, transformative potential, mainly because of its size, reach, and where it sits inside Indonesia's national development plan. As a program that targets around 82–83 million beneficiaries, MBG could reduce child malnutrition, lower stunting, and raise school involvement, plus it can nudge rural farming demand and support longer term human capital build up (Agushybana et al., 2025; Bahrun & Wildan, 2022; Milwan & Sunarya, 2023; Mulyani et al., 2025). There are also knock on, or multiplier effects, through local jobs, food output, and wider regional supply chain growth.

Still, that same broad scale that makes MBG so meaningful also leaves it pretty exposed, almost fragile, to systemic failure. The qualitative signals indicate MBG is structurally open to implementation troubles, because its national

The demographic profile of the facilitators in terms of the following:

- 1.1. Age
- 1.2. Sex
- 1.3. Civil Status
- 1.4. Educational Attainment
- 1.5. Length of Service

The tables that follow summarize the demographic profile of the respondents according to gender and years of service.

reach means small operational missteps get amplified quickly. For example, one food safety incident, a procurement breakdown, or a governance lapse can rapidly turn into wider institutional mistrust and even disrupt national policy. So overall, this places MBG as a high impact but high-risk public effort that really needs exceptional implementation control. The findings are;

- *"The findings suggests that MBG has a rather huge, transformative potential, mainly because of its size, reach, and where it sits inside Indonesia's national development plan"*
- *"... Still, that same broad scale that makes MBG so meaningful also leaves it pretty exposed, almost fragile, to systemic failure"*
- *"... this places MBG as a high impact but high-risk public effort that really needs exceptional implementation control."*

2. Governance Is the Most Critical Determinant of Program Success

One central thing this study points to is that governance quality ends up being the most important determinant for MBG's long-term ability to last. Looking across all the sources we reviewed, weak governance shows up as the biggest risk driver for fraud, food safety problems, uneven implementation, and also public distrust. In the qualitative review it is pretty consistent, poor oversight, split up accountability, weak audit systems, and not enough monitoring are described as the key structural weaknesses inside MBG's

implementation setup, kind of the bedrock issue, even if the language varies (Dany, 2026; Okada, 2025; Pancani & Ningsih, 2025).

During the early stages of implementation there were reported incidents like undercooked meals, food contamination and also cases where schools were said to be charging for meals that were meant to be free. Those examples suggest that the operational breakdown in MBG is usually less about the original policy intent, and more about weak governance execution in practice. So, the findings imply that transparent, multi-layered, and enforceable governance arrangements are not just extra add-on for MBG, but actually the base condition for survival. If governance controls are not kept strict, then the program becomes strongly prone to corruption, inefficiency, and reputational erosion. The findings are;

- *“One central thing this study points to is that governance quality ends up being the most important determinant for MBG’s long-term ability to last”*
- *“... poor oversight, split up accountability, weak audit systems, and not enough monitoring are described as the key structural weaknesses inside MBG’s implementation setup...”*
- *“Those examples suggest that the operational breakdown in MBG is usually less about the original policy intent, and more about weak governance execution in practice”*
- *“... transparent, multi-layered, and enforceable governance arrangements are not just extra add-on for MBG, but actually the base condition for survival.”*

3. Universal Coverage Creates Fiscal and Targeting Inefficiencies

The findings show that MBG’s universal design brings quite a lot of financial inefficiencies, especially with Indonesia’s budget constraints. Even if universal provision can boost political legitimacy a bit and make the program messaging more straightforward, the qualitative evidence implies that giving the same meal subsidies to every income group is fiscally clumsy and not really

aligned with actual nutritional need. The findings are;

- *“The findings show that MBG’s universal design brings quite a lot of financial inefficiencies...”*
“giving the same meal subsidies to every income group is fiscally clumsy and not really aligned with actual nutritional need...”
- *“...universal coverage can shift scarce public funds toward populations that are relatively lower need, while places with higher stunting and lower income still get underfunded”*
- *“...the findings lean toward a semi targeted model...”*

So, the review also finds that universal coverage can shift scarce public funds toward populations that are relatively lower need, while places with higher stunting and lower income still get underfunded. That ends up making program spending not match program need, in a pretty direct way. Because of that, the findings lean toward a semi targeted model where the full nutritional support is focused on high-risk regions like Papua and NTT, while more affluent areas or lower-risk locations use cost-sharing, or something like reduced-frequency delivery (Mohammed et al., 2023; UNICEF, 2024; Vogelzang, 2025). Overall, this kind of approach is reported to improve fiscal efficiency without damaging program equity.

4. Supply Chain Capacity Is the Operational Backbone of MBG

The findings point to supply chain capability as this kind of operational spine for MBG and, almost like, one of the strongest shapers of whether implementation actually works. Delivering millions of meals per day across Indonesia’s geographically split archipelago really calls for an interconnected supply chain process that links procurement with storage, transport, distribution, and quality control, all of it done in sync (Budiyanti et al., 2025; Fauzan & Sudrajat, 2025; Muwahidah, 2025). From the qualitative perspective, it seems MBG’s operational lift is very tied to if the supply chain stays resilient, remains traceable and can flex across regions. The findings are;

- *"The findings point to supply chain capability as this kind of operational spine for MBG..."*
- *"Delivering millions of meals per day across Indonesia's geographically split archipelago really calls for an interconnected supply chain process..."*
- *"MBG's operational lift is very tied to if the supply chain stays resilient, remains traceable and can flex across regions..."*
- *"...Nutritional results depend not only on what gets budgeted, but also on what can be delivered in a reliable way, eaten safely, and then kept under consistent monitoring".*

The evidence also surfaces the biggest pressure points, such as constraints in cold storage, supplier networks that are too fragmented, food quality that comes in inconsistent batches, traceability systems that are not fully holding, and the last mile delivery headaches especially in remote places. Altogether these findings suggest that MBG's policy success cannot be pulled apart from logistics performance. In practice, nutritional results depend not only on what gets budgeted, but also on what can be delivered in a reliable way, eaten safely, and then kept under consistent monitoring, without gaps.

5. Digital Monitoring Is Essential for Accountability and Scalability

Another big finding is that digital monitoring is essential, for MBG's scalability, transparency, and operational control, in practice. The qualitative evidence really does back up the idea that integrated digital systems are needed, to keep an eye on procurement, supplier performance, meal distribution, budget flows and even community complaints, all in real time (Suprpto et al., 2025). The findings are;

- *"...another big finding is that digital monitoring is essential, for MBG's scalability, transparency, and operational control..."*
- *"...large-scale public program like MBG cannot just lean on manual supervision alone. Real-time digital platforms are required to cut down the information gap..."*
- *"The inclusion of digital dashboards, AI supported anomaly detection, and citizen feedback channels is repeatedly seen as a key driver for adaptive governance"*

The results suggest that large-scale public program like MBG cannot just lean on manual supervision alone. Real-time digital platforms are required to cut down the information gap between the central and regional actors, and to catch irregularities early, plus it helps refine beneficiary targeting. Also, it strengthens transparency (Cheong, 2024; Singhal et al., 2024). The inclusion of digital dashboards, AI supported anomaly detection, and citizen feedback channels is repeatedly seen as a key driver for adaptive governance, and for institutional accountability (Mertens et al., 2024).

6. Centralized Standards with Decentralized Execution Offer the Most Viable Model

The review finds that MBG is most viable when it's put into place using a hybrid governance setup, where national standards are mostly centralized, but local execution stays more decentralized. If you go fully centralized, it can become kind of rigid day-to-day, plus it may not really fit regional differences. But if you swing too far into decentralization, then you can get inconsistency, weaker oversight, and uneven service quality, just not great across the board (Gobirno del Encuentro et al., 2022; Stenstrom & Heber, 2025). The findings are;

- *"The review finds that MBG is most viable when it's put into place using a hybrid governance setup, where national standards are mostly centralized, but local execution stays more decentralized..."*
- *"This approach is shown to strike the best balance between standardization, flexibility and that more contextual responsiveness".*

The findings suggest the best implementation model is basically national institutions setting mandatory standards around nutrition procurement safety and accountability, and then regional and local actors adjust menus, sourcing, and distribution based on local needs and capacity. This approach is shown to strike the best balance between standardization, flexibility and that more contextual responsiveness (Agarwal et al., 2023; Banchuen et al., 2017).

7. MBG Is a Systems Governance Challenge, Not Only a Nutrition Program

The final, and most significant finding is that MBG ought to be taken as a systems governance matter, not just a school feeding initiative, or in some sense “only meals”. The qualitative review shows that MBG’s success depends not on meal provision by itself, but on the coordinated work of several systems, like procurement, public finance, data governance, institutional oversight, regional administration and food logistics (Rassanjani & Rahmi, 2025). The findings are;

- *“The final, and most significant finding is that MBG ought to be taken as a systems governance matter, not just a school feeding initiative...”*
- *“MBG’s success depends not on meal provision by itself, but on the coordinated work of several systems. Its long-term outcome really hinges on whether Indonesia can line up nutritional goals with day-to-day operational systems...”*
- *“MBG is not basically a food program at all. It is sort of a test of state capacity”.*

This shifts how you should read MBG, more like a governance ecosystem that is complex, rather than a single sector welfare program (Gobirno del Encuentro et al., 2022; Peterdy, 2015; Stenstrom & Heber, 2025; Wangge & Idris, 2025). Its long-term outcome really hinges on whether Indonesia can line up nutritional goals with day-to-day operational systems, while keeping fiscal realism, institutional accountability, and the ability to adjust policy execution. In this regard, the qualitative evidence implies that MBG is not basically a food program at all. It is sort of a test of state capacity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Indonesia’s MBG program is really one of the most ambitious public policy initiatives in the country’s recent history, and it could end up being a transformative tool for better nutrition results, lowering child stunting, improving learning performance, and also pushing long-term human capital development forward. By reaching more than 82 million beneficiaries, including school-aged children, pregnant women, and nursing

mothers, MBG basically places nutrition policy at the center of Indonesia’s national development strategy. At the same time, it can bring wider economic advantages, not just nutrition, through local procurement, agricultural encouragement, jobs creation, and stronger food security.

From this qualitative case study, the results suggest MBG should not be seen only as a school lunch initiative or feeding program, but more as a complicated, national level systems intervention that touches public policy, governance, fiscal management and supply chain operations too. In the long run, whether it works well depends less on how big the government spending is and more on how solid the implementation framework actually is. Governance quality, institutional coordination, procurement transparency, food safety assurance, and operational resilience come up as the most important factors for program success.

The study also goes on to conclude that MBG’s universal coverage approach, even though it’s politically inclusive, ends up generating major fiscal pressures and targeting inefficiencies. Without a more differentiated allocation based on nutritional vulnerability, and regional requirements, there’s a risk the program spreads resources too thin and then weakens budget sustainability. On top of that, Indonesia’s geographic fragmentation creates serious logistical problems. This needs strong supply chain systems, workable local sourcing arrangements, and digital monitoring infrastructure that can handle real complexity.

Taken together, MBG has the capacity to become a landmark policy for inclusive development and social change in Indonesia. Still, this promise will only show up if the program is backed by rigorous governance, flexible policy design, and disciplined operational execution. Basically, MBG is a kind of test of Indonesia’s institutional ability to turn a bold policy vision into developmental outcomes that are both sustainable, and measurable.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Governance and Anti-Corruption Mechanisms

According to Sajida (2025) and Breen et al

(2025), the government ought to set up a multi-layered governance framework, with independent audits, open procurement systems, whistleblower channels, and sort of public accountability dashboards. It really needs clear lines of responsibility across national, provincial and local agencies, so that you can cut down on fraud, money leakage, and those frustrating inconsistencies in implementation.

2. Adopt a Semi-Targeted Fiscal Allocation Model

To make fiscal efficiency better, MBG should mostly focus on full nutritional support for areas with higher stunting and lower income like Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and other vulnerable regions (Katsurai & Dartanto, 2026; Ludher & Nasution, 2024; Satriawan & Nugroho, 2025). Places with lower nutritional risk and better household buying power can do partial cost sharing or a less intense program, kind of like a reduced level effort. In this way the government spending can be optimized, but equity and the social impact still get protected, even if the approach is more targeted.

3. Develop an Integrated Digital Monitoring System

According to OECD Digital Government Studies (2021), a nation-wide digital platform should be put in place, to keep track of procurement activities, supplier performance, budget use, meal distribution, food safety incident reports, and community complaints in real time. Artificial intelligence together with predictive analytics can be used too, to spot anomalies early and to back up evidence-based decisions (Cote, 2021; Sengupta, 2024).

4. Strengthen Supply Chain and Food Safety Infrastructure

The investment should go into cold storage facilities, plus transport networks, standardized packing, traceability systems, and regular food safety checks (Mustafa et al., 2024; Stinebaugh, 2024). Standard operating procedures need to be carried out in a consistent way so meal quality stays put and beneficiary health is safeguarded.

5. Institutionalize Local Procurement and SME Participation

The program should, in a kind of practical way prioritize sourcing from local farmers, fisheries, cooperatives, and MSMEs. When you buy local, supply chains tend to get shorter, transport costs go down, it can help rural economies keep moving, and the whole program becomes more sustainable, over time (Kamgang et al., 2023; Son, 2024).

6. Implement Centralized Standards with Decentralized Execution

National authorities should spell out mandatory benchmarks for nutrition, purchasing, security, and the required reporting, while local governments and the task forces kind of adapt how things roll based on what is happening in each region (Mozaffarian et al., 2018). This mixed model kind of lands on a good balance between uniformity and being flexible in context, even if it means extra coordination.

7. Integrate Climate and Sustainability Considerations

MBG should start to weave in climate resilient procurement habits, plus sustainable agricultural sourcing, reduce waste, and go for environmentally friendly packaging. If sustainability is built into the program design from the beginning it will make things more resilient, and it should also line up MBG with the wider environmental goals (AlNazer et al., 2026; Hariyani et al., 2024).

8. Establish Continuous Monitoring and Impact Evaluation

From time to time there should be periodic evaluations, to see how the program is really doing on nutritional status, educational outputs, the fiscal angle. and local economic advancement. The results need to be brought back in order to refine who gets targeted, to make day-to-day operations more efficient, and to keep policy effectiveness getting stronger over time (Kiddler et al., 2024).

Contributions and Implications

1. Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing MBG as an integrated systems governance model, that ties together nutrition policy with public administration, welfare economics and operations and supply chain management. It also pushes beyond earlier theories on public program implementation, by stressing the operational blueprint that you need, for large scale welfare interventions, not just the high-level intent.

2. Practical Contribution

The recommendations sort of give a strategic roadmap for policymakers, program managers, and public administrators to help improve MBG's governance, efficiency and longterm sustainability. It is meant to be an actionable guidance for boosting institutional capacity and operational performance in a more practical way.

3. Societal Contribution

If it is put into practice the right way, MBG can

truly cut down on malnutrition and the gap in education, it can also help the local economies move along, and raise the quality of the future workforce in practice. Honestly the whole thing could boost social fairness, and steer national development to be more inclusive.

4. Policy Contribution

This manuscript offers evidence-based insights that might inform future reforms in Indonesia's social protection, food security and public health systems. It also gives lessons to other emerging economies who are considering large scale school feeding and nutrition programs.

5. Academic Contribution

The study establishes MBG as a valuable contemporary sort of case for research across public policy, governance, and supply chain management, so there are real openings for future comparative and empirical studies on big scale welfare implementation and how it all works in practice.

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