

Implementation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program Policy from A Good Governance Perspective in Madiun City In 2025

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ABSTRACT

This study aims analyze the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program in Madiun City from a good governance perspective, focusing on communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Although previous studies have discussed school feeding programs and policy implementation, most tend to examine them separately and rarely integrate the perspective of policy implementation theory with good governance principles at the local level. This study addresses this gap by combining George C. Edwards III's implementation model with a good governance framework. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving informants from the Education Office, Nutritional Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG), and school principals, selected using purposive sampling. Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results show that the implementation of the MBG Program in Madiun City has generally been effective, supported by adequate resources, clear bureaucratic structure, and positive implementer commitment. However, challenges remain in communication consistency, limited field supervision, and uneven technical understanding at the school level. From a good governance perspective, the program reflects transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, but still requires improvement in participation and coordination. This study contributes by offering an integrative analytical framework for understanding policy implementation in nutrition-based public service programs at the local level.

Keywords: Policy Implementation; Free Nutritious Meals; Good Governance; Public Services; Madiun City



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INTRODUCTION

A country's development is measured not only by economic growth and infrastructure development, but also by the quality of its human resources. One crucial factor in developing quality human resources is meeting the nutritional needs of the community, particularly school-age children. Adequate and balanced nutritional intake plays a crucial role in supporting children's physical development, intelligence, and cognitive abilities. Various studies show that children who receive good nutrition from an early age tend to have higher levels of learning concentration, better health, and optimal productivity as adults. Conversely, malnutrition can lead to various health problems such as stunting, anemia, and chronic energy deficiency, which impact the quality of education and child development. The World Health Organization states that malnutrition remains a global challenge because it directly impacts the quality of future generations (Bhardwaj *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, various countries have begun developing nutritional intervention policies through healthy school feeding programs. These programs not only aim to meet children's nutritional needs but also support improvements in the quality of education by improving learning concentration, school attendance, and creating a more conducive learning environment.

In many developed countries, the policy of providing nutritious school meals has long been part of human resource development strategies. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, and several European countries have successfully implemented school meal programs integrated with their national education systems. These programs not only serve to meet students' nutritional needs but also serve as a medium for educating them about healthy lifestyles, hygiene, and the value of togetherness (Hamed Kandil, 2022). In Japan, for example, the school lunch program focuses not only on providing healthy food but also on teaching students the importance of balanced nutrition, social responsibility, and discipline in their daily lives. The success of these programs demonstrates that systematically designed nutrition intervention policies can have a broad impact on improving the quality of education and public health. Furthermore, school meal programs also provide socioeconomic benefits for families, particularly those in lower-middle-class communities. Guaranteed nutritious food at school reduces household expenses, allowing parents to focus more on supporting their children's education (Guio, 2023). The experiences of these countries demonstrate that integrating nutrition and education policies can be a crucial strategy in creating a healthy, intelligent, and productive generation.

In Indonesia, nutritional issues among school-aged children remain a serious challenge to human resource development. Data from various government reports indicate that cases of stunting, anemia, and malnutrition are still found in some children in various regions, particularly in areas with relatively high poverty rates. These conditions directly impact students' learning abilities at school, such as decreased concentration, fatigue, and increased susceptibility to disease (Ekholuenetale *et al.*, 2022). The long-term impact of these problems not only affects individual health but also has the potential to hinder national development by suboptimal human resource quality. Therefore, ensuring children's nutritional needs is not only a health issue but is also closely related to educational, social, and economic aspects. Children who do not receive adequate nutrition tend to have a lower chance of achieving optimal academic performance. This condition can widen social disparities within society and reduce the nation's competitiveness in the future. Therefore, comprehensive policy interventions from the government are needed to ensure every child has access to adequate nutrition as part of sustainable human development efforts.

One policy developed by the government to address this problem is the Makanan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) in Indonesian name program (Parikesit, Yudithadewi & Yuliastanti, 2026). This program is designed as a form of government intervention to meet the nutritional needs of school children while simultaneously improving the quality of education. Through this program, students are expected to gain access to healthy, nutritious, and balanced meals to support their learning activities at school. In addition to its health objectives, the MBG program also has an important social dimension, as it helps reduce social disparities in meeting children's basic needs. For families with limited income, this program can reduce the burden of household expenses and ensure that their children receive adequate nutrition while at school. Thus, this program serves not only as a food supply policy but also as a social development instrument aimed at creating more equitable educational opportunities for all children. If implemented effectively, the MBG program has the potential to positively impact health, education quality, and human resource development in Indonesia (Sari *et al.*, 2025).

At the regional level, the implementation of the MBG policy is also a crucial part of efforts to improve community welfare and education quality. Madiun City, a region in East Java Province, is implementing this program as a follow-up to the central government's policy. The local government strives to provide balanced, nutritious meals for students to support improved health and learning quality at school. However, the implementation of this program still faces various challenges, such as inter-agency coordination, food distribution mechanisms, budget management, and community participation in program oversight. These conditions indicate that the success of program implementation is determined not only by the availability of policies, but also by the quality of governance in carrying them out. Therefore, a good governance approach is important to assess the effectiveness of the MBG program implementation. Principles such as transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and public participation can be used as indicators to evaluate the extent to which this program is able to achieve its stated goals. Based on this, this study was conducted to analyze the implementation of the MBG policy in Madiun City from a good governance perspective. Despite the growing number of studies on school feeding programs and public policy implementation, several gaps remain. First, previous studies tend to analyze policy implementation and good governance separately, without integrating both perspectives into a unified analytical framework. Second, empirical studies focusing on the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) Program at the local government level are still limited, particularly in examining how governance quality influences implementation effectiveness. Third, there is a lack of research that explores the interaction between implementation variables and governance principles in shaping policy outcomes in the field. Based on these gaps, this study aims to, analyze the implementation of the MBG Program in Madiun City using George C. Edwards III's policy implementation model examine how good governance principles are applied in the implementation process and identify the interaction between implementation factors and governance principles in influencing program effectiveness at the local level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basic Concepts of Public Policy

Public policy is a series of decisions and actions made by the government to address problems that arise in society. This policy is formulated through a process of formulation, implementation, and evaluation to achieve specific goals related to the public interest. According to Carl J. Friedrich, public policy is a series of actions proposed by the

government or a specific group within a given environment to achieve predetermined goals (Friedmann, 2020). Public policy can also be understood as a process involving inputs in the form of public problems, a decision-making process, and outputs in the form of government programs or actions that impact society. However, these definitions tend to emphasize policy as a linear process and often overlook the complexity of implementation in real contexts. In practice, public policy is influenced by dynamic interactions between actors, institutions, and environmental factors. Therefore, understanding public policy requires not only a conceptual definition but also an analysis of how policies are implemented and adapted in the field. This study adopts this perspective by focusing on the implementation stage as a critical arena where policy success is determined.

Legal Basis for Public Policy

The legal basis is an important foundation for implementing public policy to ensure legitimacy and legal certainty. In the Indonesian government system, public policy must be based on applicable laws and regulations. One of the regulations that serves as the basis for implementing public policy is Law Number 30 of 2014 concerning Government Administration (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, & Clerkin, 2022). This law emphasizes the importance of governance based on the principles of legal certainty, accountability, transparency, and professionalism. With a clear legal basis, government policies can be implemented in a focused manner and be accountable to the public.

Public Policy Implementation

Policy implementation is a crucial stage in the public policy process because it is at this stage that government decisions begin to be implemented in practice. Implementation relates to how policies are translated into action by implementers in the field. According to George C. Edwards III, the success of policy implementation is influenced by four main factors: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Putra & Khaidir, 2019). Communication relates to the delivery of policy information to implementers, resources include manpower and budget, disposition relates to implementer commitment, and bureaucratic structure relates to the division of tasks and coordination between institutions in policy implementation. Although Edwards III's model provides a clear framework for analyzing policy implementation, it has limitations in explaining the broader governance context in which policies are implemented. The model focuses on internal administrative factors but pays less attention to external aspects such as transparency, participation, and accountability. Therefore, this study complements Edwards III's model with a good governance perspective to provide a more comprehensive analysis of policy implementation.

The Concept of Good Governance

Good governance is a concept of government administration that emphasizes transparent, accountable, effective, and responsive governance to the needs of the community. This concept developed as an effort to improve the quality of public services and encourage public participation in the government process. Good governance involves not only the government but also the community and the private sector in decision-making (Rwebangira, 2023). A government that implements good governance is expected to create an administrative system that is open, responsible, and oriented toward the public interest. Thus, good governance is an important principle in the implementation of public policy. Despite its broad applicability, the concept of good governance is often criticized

for being normative and difficult to measure empirically. Many studies highlight governance principles without clearly linking them to policy outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to operationalize good governance principles by directly connecting them to policy implementation indicators, allowing for a more concrete and measurable analysis in the context of the MBG program.

Principles of Good Governance

The principles of good governance serve as guidelines for good governance. Some of the main principles frequently used in public administration studies include transparency, accountability, effectiveness, participation, and fairness. Transparency relates to the openness of information to the public, while accountability relates to the government's responsibility for every policy it adopts. Effectiveness emphasizes the optimal achievement of program objectives, while participation demonstrates public involvement in the policy process (Bobbio, 2019). The principle of fairness emphasizes that public services must be provided equally to all members of society without discrimination. While these principles provide important normative guidelines, their implementation often faces challenges in practice, such as limited public participation, weak accountability mechanisms, and information asymmetry. This indicates that the success of governance principles depends on how they are integrated into policy implementation processes. Therefore, this study examines how these principles are applied in practice and how they influence the effectiveness of the MBG program.

Free Nutritious Meal Program

The MBG is a government policy aimed at improving the nutritional quality of students, particularly school-aged children. This program is implemented by providing free nutritious meals to students at school to support their health and concentration in learning. Furthermore, the MBG program is also part of the government's efforts to address nutritional issues such as stunting and malnutrition in children. The implementation of this program involves various parties, including the central government, local governments, schools, and food providers (Tanziha, Ekayanti & Ahmad, 2025). Therefore, good coordination between institutions is essential for the program to run effectively. Previous studies on the MBG program mostly focus on its impact on nutrition and education outcomes, but limited attention has been given to its implementation process and governance aspects. This creates a gap in understanding how the program operates at the local level and what factors influence its success or failure. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the implementation process by integrating policy implementation theory and good governance principles.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted in Madiun City, East Java Province, focusing on institutions directly involved in program implementation: the Madiun City Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit, the Education Office, and several elementary and secondary schools that are beneficiaries of the program. The research focus is based on George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory, which encompasses four main aspects: communication, resources, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure, which are then linked to good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, participation, and fairness. The research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, selecting informants deemed to have a deep understanding

of MBG program implementation. These included the Head of the Madiun City SPPG and staff, the Head of the Elementary and Junior High School Divisions of the Madiun City Education Office, and elementary and junior high school principals as program implementers at the educational unit level.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, but the data collection process is also supported by interview guidelines, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted semi-structured to obtain in-depth information regarding policy implementation, resource availability, implementer attitudes, and the application of good governance principles. Direct observations were conducted at schools to assess the food distribution process, menu quality, and the involvement of various parties in program implementation. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the data through the collection of archives, program reports, budget data, and relevant policy documents.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously from data collection to the reporting stage to gain a comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, this research employed Creswell's case study analysis approach to identify key themes, link field findings to the theoretical framework, and interpret the meaning of MBG policy implementation in the context of the application of good governance principles at the local government level. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a systematic, in-depth, and comprehensive overview of the implementation of the MBG program in Madiun City.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The MBG is a government policy aimed at improving the quality of human resources by meeting the nutritional needs of the community, particularly schoolchildren. This program is implemented as part of the government's efforts to reduce stunting rates, improve student health, and support a more optimal learning process. Through this program, the government provides free nutritious meals to students in schools with the hope of improving learning concentration and growth.

In its implementation, the MBG program involves various government agencies and educational institutions. Local governments play a role in coordinating program implementation, while schools act as direct implementers, interacting with students as beneficiaries (Green & Koebele, 2025). Furthermore, the program involves food providers, nutrition supervisors, and other relevant parties to ensure the quality of the food provided meets health standards and students' nutritional needs.

Before conducting interviews with informants, researchers first conducted initial observations of the program's implementation in the field. These observations aimed to obtain a general overview of the program's implementation mechanisms, the food distribution process, and the roles of the various parties involved in implementing the policy. To ensure analytical clarity, this study uses measurable indicators for each variable based on Edward III's framework. Communication is assessed through clarity, consistency, and transmission of information. Resources are measured through adequacy of human resources, budget, facilities, and supervision. Disposition is evaluated based on commitment, responsiveness, and consistency of implementers. Bureaucratic structure is analyzed through clarity of roles, coordination mechanisms, and the existence of standard operating procedures (SOPs). These indicators are used to assess whether the

implementation of the MBG program can be considered effective and aligned with good governance principles.

Communication

Communication is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of public policies. In the implementation of the MBG in Madiun City, communication flows from the central government to the regional government, then to the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit, the Education Office, and schools as implementers at the educational unit level. This communication process is carried out through various mechanisms, such as coordination meetings, outreach activities, and the use of online communication platforms like WhatsApp groups to facilitate rapid information dissemination (Resende *et al.*, 2019). Based on interviews with the Head of the SPPG, the process of disseminating policy information from the central government generally occurs through coordination with the regional government before being disseminated to schools. The information conveyed includes program objectives, implementation mechanisms, and the division of roles between the agencies involved. One informant stated that communication between the SPPG, the Education Office, and schools has generally been going well, although in some situation's discrepancies in information on the ground require further clarification.

Furthermore, cross-agency coordination also involves the Military District Command (Kodim) to assist with administrative processes and facilitate coordination between relevant agencies (Setiawan & Sari, 2023). During the program's implementation, the School Teacher Training and Education Agency and the Education Office jointly conducted outreach to school principals regarding the MBG program's implementation mechanisms, including food distribution procedures, beneficiary data collection, and reporting on program implementation in schools. From the school perspective, principals stated that they generally understood the objectives and implementation mechanisms of the MBG program (Siswanto, Pisriwati & Yogyanto, 2025). Schools played a role in collecting data on beneficiary students, receiving food distribution from providers, and managing the distribution process. One principal stated that, in general, the government's directives were quite clear, although sometimes technical changes required schools to readjust their implementation.

Communication was also two-way, with schools having the opportunity to convey any challenges or input to relevant agencies. This was usually done through coordination forums or agreed-upon communication channels. With this two-way communication, schools not only implemented policies but also provided input for improving program implementation in the field. However, research also showed that several communication challenges persisted, particularly related to delays in information and gradual technical changes. This situation sometimes led to confusion at the school level. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen coordination and consistency in delivering information so that the implementation of the MBG program can run more effectively and efficiently.

Resources

Resources are a crucial factor in the successful implementation of public policies, as they determine the implementer's ability to execute the program in accordance with its stated objectives. In the implementation of the MBG in Madiun City, these resources include the availability of human resources, budget support, infrastructure, and technical support in the form of program implementation guidelines. Interviews with the Education Office revealed that budget and human resource requirements were generally met because most program management, including funding and staffing, falls under the coordination of the

Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit, supported by the National Nutrition Agency. The Education Office plays a role in overseeing program implementation in schools and ensuring the accuracy of beneficiary data (Kiftiyah *et al.*, 2025)

In terms of technical support, the central government has provided menu guides and nutritional standards as a reference for program implementers. These guidelines help ensure that the meals provided are not only filling but also meet the nutritional needs of students. Furthermore, prior to program implementation, implementing parties, such as the kitchen team and program managers, received information and training on the program's implementation process, from food processing to distribution to schools. However, interviews revealed that there are still limited supervisors in the field, making daily monitoring less effective.

In terms of facilities and infrastructure, some schools do not have dedicated kitchens for the MBG program because food processing is carried out at. Schools generally only provide a place to receive and distribute food to students. Despite this, coordination between schools and food suppliers is quite good, with regular communication regarding delivery schedules and food availability. Overall, resource indicators indicate that the implementation of the MBG program in Madiun City has been supported by relatively adequate resources. Although strengthening of supervision is still needed to ensure optimal and sustainable program implementation.

Disposition

Disposition is a crucial factor in public policy implementation, relating to the attitude, commitment, and willingness of implementers to carry out the program in accordance with its stated objectives. In the implementation of the MBG in Madiun City, the disposition of implementers is a crucial aspect, as the program's success depends not only on regulations and resources, but also on the attitudes and responsibilities of implementers in the field (Rosydah & Nafisah, 2025). Interviews with program implementers revealed that, in general, implementers demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting the success of the MBG program. This was reflected in their willingness to carry out their duties in accordance with established procedures and maintain the quality of the food provided to students.

Mas Ahmad Faris, Head of the Food and Nutrition Service, stated that the implementation of this program is not solely focused on food distribution but also on the responsibility to maintain the nutritional quality and safety of food for children. He stated, "We at SPPG certainly strive to implement this program as well as possible, as it is aimed at school children. So, it's not just about providing food; we also pay attention to the quality of the ingredients, the cooking process, and distribution to ensure that it remains suitable and nutritious when it reaches schools." This statement demonstrates the implementers' awareness and commitment to ensuring that the program's objectives are truly achieved.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Mas Ari, who is involved in the field management of the MBG program. He stated that the program's success depends heavily on the implementers' discipline and responsibility in carrying out each stage of the activity. He said, "Essentially, those of us in the field must consistently implement existing regulations. The guidelines from the central government are clear, so it's just a matter of how we implement them with discipline so that this program truly benefits the children." This statement demonstrates that the implementers have a positive attitude and an awareness of the importance of responsibility in running the program.

Based on the interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the disposition indicators in the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Madiun City

demonstrate a fairly good attitude and commitment from the implementers. The implementers not only carry out the program as an administrative obligation but also demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the quality of service to the community. However, consistency in implementation still needs to be strengthened through an ongoing monitoring and evaluation system to ensure optimal and sustainable program implementation.

Bureaucratic Structure

Bureaucratic structure is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of public policy because it relates to the organizational system, division of tasks, and coordination mechanisms between agencies involved in program implementation. In the context of the MBG in Madiun City, the bureaucratic structure plays a role in ensuring that each agency involved has clear roles and responsibilities, ensuring effective and coordinated program implementation (Maruapey *et al.*, 2025). Research shows that the implementation of the MBG in Madiun City has been supported by a clear division of tasks between the central government, local governments, the School Supervisory Agency, and schools as program beneficiaries.

This was also conveyed by Mr. Waron Budianto, an official from the Madiun City Education Office, who explained that the roles of each agency have been regulated according to their respective authorities. He stated, "From the office itself, it's more about supervision and coordination, Dik. Technical implementation and budget management are handled by the SPPG. We at the office only ensure that recipient schools have the correct data and that the program can run according to existing regulations." This statement demonstrates that the division of tasks between agencies has been clearly established, minimizing overlapping authority in program implementation.

Furthermore, the bureaucratic structure for implementing the MBG is supported by the existence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which serve as guidelines for field implementers. Ahmad Faris, Head of the SPPG, explained that program implementation always adheres to guidelines established by the central government. He stated, "We at SPPG implement this program in accordance with the SOPs established by the central government. Therefore, the flow is clear, from material procurement and processing to distribution to schools. With these regulations, implementation in the field is more focused." This statement demonstrates that the existence of SOPs helps implementers carry out their tasks systematically and in a coordinated manner.

Based on interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the bureaucratic structure for implementing the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Madiun City has been functioning quite well. A clear division of tasks between implementing agencies, the existence of technical guidelines, and regular coordination are supporting factors in the smooth implementation of the program. However, regular coordination and evaluation are still necessary to ensure program implementation is more effective, efficient, and provides optimal benefits for students as program recipients.

The results of this study indicate that the four variables in Edward III's policy implementation theory communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure do not stand alone but are interconnected, forming a system that influences the overall success of the Free Nutritional Meals (MBG) Program. Field findings demonstrate that communication barriers, such as delays in information and differences in technical understanding, impact not only the communication aspect itself but also other aspects, such as disposition and the effectiveness of resource use. For example, when information received by implementers is inconsistent, this can reduce the level of certainty in task execution and affect the attitudes and commitment of implementers in the field.

Furthermore, the limited number of supervisors, as part of the resources, also impacts weak implementation control, which ultimately impacts the overall quality of program implementation. On the other hand, a clearly established bureaucratic structure through the division of tasks and standard operating procedures (SOPs) does provide a systematic framework, but without the support of effective communication and adequate resources, this structure cannot function optimally. Thus, this study confirms that the success of policy implementation is determined not only by the strength of each variable, but by how these variables interact synergistically.

Implicationally, the results of this study provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the study of public policy implementation and good governance. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of Edward III's theory in explaining the dynamics of policy implementation at the local level, particularly in the context of public service programs based on basic community needs. However, this study also shows that in practice, these four variables need to be integrated with the principles of good governance so that policy implementation can run more optimally, transparently, and accountably. In other words, policy implementation theory needs to be contextualized with the values of good governance to produce a more comprehensive analysis. Meanwhile, practically, this study provides recommendations for local governments and policymakers to improve the quality of the MBG program implementation by strengthening a more integrated communication system, increasing the number and capacity of human resources, especially in the field of supervision, and optimizing the use of information technology in the program's reporting and monitoring system. Furthermore, it is also important to encourage community and private sector participation in supporting the program's sustainability. With these implications, it is hoped that the MBG program will not only operate as a short-term policy but will also be able to become part of a sustainable human resource development strategy.

In terms of novelty, this study offers a contribution that distinguishes it from previous studies, particularly in integrating Edward III's policy implementation theory approach with a good governance perspective within a comprehensive analytical framework. Most previous studies tend to focus on only one approach, either policy implementation or governance, resulting in few simultaneous studies examining the relationship between the two within the context of the MBG program at the regional level. Furthermore, this study provides an empirical contribution through a case study in Madiun City, which concretely illustrates the dynamics of policy implementation at the local level, including the various challenges and opportunities faced by implementers in the field. Another novelty lies in the finding of a gap between policy communication at the central level and technical understanding at the school level, demonstrating the importance of information consistency in the implementation process. This study also highlights that successful implementation depends not only on structural and administrative aspects, but also on the interaction between actors and the ability to adapt to changes in the field. Thus, this study not only contributes to theoretical development but also provides practical insights that can be used as a basis for formulating more effective, adaptive, and good governance-oriented policies in the future.

This study not only focuses on describing the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program, but also provides analytical contributions in understanding how the quality of governance influences the success of public policies at the regional level. In this context, MBG is seen as a strategic government instrument in improving the quality of human resources through nutrition interventions integrated with the education sector. The research findings indicate that the success of program implementation is not solely determined by budget availability or well-designed policies,

but is highly dependent on effective inter-agency communication, human resource readiness, the commitment of implementers in the field, and the clarity of the bureaucratic structure that regulates the program's workflow. Furthermore, a good governance approach serves as an important framework in evaluating the extent to which this program is implemented transparently, accountably, and responsive to community needs. This study also highlights that although these principles have begun to be implemented, there are still gaps in aspects of oversight, consistency of technical understanding at the implementer level, and optimization of stakeholder participation that have the potential to affect the program's sustainability. Therefore, this study implies that strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system, increasing the capacity of implementers, and utilizing information technology in coordination and reporting are strategic steps to improve the quality of policy implementation. The main finding in the bureaucratic structure aspect shows that the division of roles, coordination mechanisms, and the existence of SOPs are relatively clear, indicating that structural indicators have been met. However, the study also identifies problems related to coordination gaps between institutions and the need for more adaptive and continuous evaluation mechanisms.

From an interpretative perspective, this condition indicates that formal structures alone are not sufficient to ensure effective implementation. The effectiveness of bureaucratic structure depends on the flexibility of coordination and the ability of institutions to adapt to dynamic conditions in the field. Therefore, strengthening inter-agency collaboration is essential to improve overall program performance.

DISCUSSION

Based on research conducted through interviews, observations, and documentation, the implementation of the MBG program can be analyzed using Edward III's policy implementation theory, which encompasses communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. These four factors play a crucial role in determining the success of a public policy in achieving its stated objectives.

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program in Madiun City has generally been quite successful, particularly in terms of communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure, as outlined in Edward III's policy implementation theory. This finding aligns with research by Putri *et al.* (2025) which states that the success of the MBG program is strongly influenced by the availability of adequate resources and inter-agency coordination. Furthermore, research by Maruapey *et al.* (2025) also emphasizes that collaboration between actors is a crucial factor in supporting the implementation of public service-based policies. However, this study also found obstacles in the communication aspect, particularly related to delays in information dissemination and differences in technical understanding at the school level, indicating a gap between central-level policies and local implementation. This contrasts with the findings of Sari *et al.* (2025) which stated that the MBG program tends to run more optimally when the communication system is nationally standardized.

Theoretically, this condition reinforces Edward III's view that communication is not only related to the delivery of information, but also includes clarity, consistency, and continuity of messages received by implementers. Furthermore, although the resources in this study were deemed relatively adequate, the limited number of supervisors in the field indicates that the resource dimension is measured not only by quantity but also by the quality and distribution of those resources. This indicates that the success of policy implementation is greatly influenced by the government's ability to manage resources

effectively. From a dispositional perspective, the positive attitude and commitment of implementers are key supporting factors for program success, which aligns with the theory that policy acceptance by implementers will increase implementation effectiveness. However, reliance on individual commitment also has the potential to lead to inconsistencies in program implementation if not supported by a robust oversight system. Meanwhile, a clear bureaucratic structure and the existence of standard operating procedures (SOPs) have helped facilitate implementation, but challenges remain in cross-agency coordination, indicating that formal structures alone are insufficient without the support of adaptive coordination mechanisms.

Furthermore, from a resource perspective, the success of the MBG program is heavily influenced by the availability of human resources, budget, and supporting facilities and infrastructure. The research findings indicate that most program implementers have endeavored to carry out their duties effectively, despite limitations in terms of supervisory staff and supporting facilities (Putri *et al.*, 2025). These limitations can impact the effectiveness of program implementation if not balanced by good coordination between the parties involved.

In terms of the disposition or attitude of implementers, most parties involved in the MBG program demonstrated a positive attitude toward the policy. Implementers understood that the program had a good goal of improving student health and well-being. The acceptance and commitment of implementers were crucial factors in supporting the successful implementation of the policy. With support from implementers in the field, the MBG program could be implemented more effectively.

The implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program in Madiun City can also be analyzed from a good governance perspective, which emphasizes the principles of transparency, accountability, effectiveness, participation, and fairness in government administration. From a transparency perspective, this study shows that program-related information has been disseminated through outreach activities, coordination, and technical guidance to implementers at the school level. However, this transparency remains internal between institutions and has not fully reached the wider community, such as parents of students as indirect beneficiaries. This suggests that public information disclosure still needs to be expanded to ensure the public understands the program's mechanisms comprehensively. From an accountability perspective, the clear division of tasks and the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs) indicate that the program has a sound basis for accountability. However, the reporting and monitoring systems still need to be strengthened, particularly in ensuring food quality and accurate distribution. Meanwhile, from an effectiveness perspective, the program is considered successful in achieving its basic goal of providing nutritious meals for students, although its implementation still faces several technical challenges.

Conversely, from a participation and fairness perspective, the implementation of the MBG program still exhibits several limitations that require attention. Community participation, particularly among parents and surrounding communities, remains relatively low because the program is primarily top-down and dominated by the government and related institutions. However, community involvement can be a crucial factor in improving program oversight and sustainability. This lack of participation has the potential to create information gaps and diminish the sense of ownership of the program at the community level. From a fairness perspective, although the program aims to provide equitable benefits to all students, there is still potential for inequity in its implementation, such as differences in facilities between schools and limited access in some locations. This situation indicates that the distribution of program benefits is not

entirely equitable. Furthermore, differences in the capacity of implementers in each school can also impact the quality of program implementation.

One major weakness is the limited number of supervisors, which prevents optimal program monitoring. This can impact inconsistent food quality, timely distribution, and the potential for irregularities in program implementation. Furthermore, the high dependence on the government as the primary actor also poses a challenge, as the program has not fully engaged the private sector or the community in a broader collaborative framework. If not managed properly, this situation could pose a risk to the program's sustainability in the event of budget constraints or future policy changes. In addition, the gradual occurrence of technical changes can also cause confusion at the implementer level, which has the potential to hinder the effectiveness of program implementation.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and their implications. First, the study used a descriptive qualitative approach focused on a single location, Madiun City. Therefore, the results cannot necessarily be generalized to other regions with different social, economic, and administrative characteristics. Second, the limited number of informants and the use of purposive sampling techniques allow for subjectivity in data collection, as the information obtained is highly dependent on the perspectives and experiences of each informant. Third, the study focused more on the perspectives of program implementers, such as government agencies, schools, and technical implementation units, and therefore did not fully reflect the perspectives of direct beneficiaries, namely students and parents. Fourth, the limited timeframe also hampered longitudinal observation of program implementation, preventing the capture of the dynamics of policy change and the program's long-term sustainability. Furthermore, limited access to administrative data and certain internal documents prevented the analysis from being fully supported by comprehensive quantitative data, such as budget effectiveness or direct impacts on student nutritional status. Therefore, further research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach, expand research locations, and involve more stakeholders to obtain a more comprehensive and in-depth picture of the implementation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of research on the implementation of MBG in Madiun City, it can be concluded that in general this program has run quite well and demonstrated the application of good governance principles such as transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and coordination between stakeholders. Analysis using George C. Edwards III's policy implementation theory shows that indicators of communication, resources, disposition, and overall bureaucratic structure have supported program implementation. The communication aspect has been implemented through socialization, technical guidelines, and routine coordination between the central government, local governments, SPPG, and schools, although there are still differences in technical understanding at the implementing level. In terms of resources, the program is supported by the availability of budget, human resources, and a clear distribution system and nutritional standards, although there are still limitations in supervisory personnel and unequal facilities in some schools. In the disposition indicator, implementers show a fairly good commitment and responsibility in implementing the program, especially in maintaining food quality and distribution accuracy, but consistency of implementation still depends on individual discipline so that it requires strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system. Meanwhile, the bureaucratic structure indicator shows a clear division of tasks, the

existence of SOPs, and monitoring and reporting mechanisms that support accountability for program implementation. Thus, the implementation of the MBG policy in Madiun City reflects the principles of transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, although participation and uniformity of technical understanding at the school level still need to be improved. Therefore, it is recommended that the government strengthen policy socialization and mentoring for school implementers, increase the availability of supporting resources and facilities, conduct ongoing training and evaluation to strengthen implementer commitment, and optimize the use of information technology in the administration and reporting system. These efforts are expected to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the Free Nutritious Meal Program implementation, thereby providing more equitable benefits to students and supporting better governance.

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program going forward. First, the government needs to strengthen the communication and coordination system between the institutions involved, both at the central and regional levels, to avoid differences in technical understanding in the field. Developing more detailed technical guidelines, accompanied by ongoing outreach to schools as the primary implementers, is essential to ensure uniform program implementation. Second, improving the quality and quantity of human resources, particularly field supervisors, requires a primary focus to ensure optimal and sustainable monitoring and evaluation. Third, the government is advised to utilize information technology in the program's reporting and monitoring system, allowing data to be accessed in real time, transparently, and accountably. Fourth, increased community participation, including parents and schools, is needed in overseeing program implementation to encourage more participatory and responsive governance. Furthermore, periodic evaluations of food quality, distribution, and the program's impact on student health and learning need to be systematically conducted. With these steps, it is hoped that the implementation of the MBG Program can run more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably and provide optimal benefits for improving the quality of human resources in Indonesia.

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