

Evaluation of Mid-Day Meal Scheme



Home Science

KEYWORDS : Mid-Day Meal, Scheme, Education, Nutrition, Health

Tanveer

Research Scholar, Institute of Home Science University of Kashmir, Srinagar

Uzma Amin

Research Scholar, Institute of Home Science University of Kashmir, Srinagar

ABSTRACT

The present study investigated mainly the implementation of Mid-day Meal Scheme in different Government schools of Kashmir Division. The data was collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The findings of the present study indicated that there was an increase in attendance in maximum schools. Facilities like proper drinking water, good sanitation and proper hygiene of food served to the students were present, however, some schools were still lacking some facilities. Student's health status was improved by Mid-day Meal. It has reduced the dropout rates in Government schools. The scheme has been more successful in improving participation rates of students thereby reducing gender disparity in schooling. It is developing a positive and favourable atmosphere for elementary school teachers and students.

Introduction

The Mid-day Meal Scheme is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India that among other things, seeks to address issues of food security, lack of nutrition and access to education on a pan nation scale. The Mid-day Meal Programme is also known as school lunch programme. This programme has been in operation since 1961 throughout the country. The major objective of the programme is also to attract more children for admission for schools and retain them. So that literacy improvement of children could be brought about. Mid-day Meal Scheme was introduced primarily to protect the nutritional as well as the educational rights of the children (Basu, *et al.* 2003). This is due to the fact that children are not able to concentrate in their studies with empty stomach and there is a need to focus upon the Mid-day Meal Scheme, to overcome child's short term hunger. Thus, initiating this kind of meal programme, Government of India aimed at helping the children especially belonging to the poor socio-economic background to attend school and to have at least Mid-day Meal through which their education as well as food related issues could be addressed. Significantly, the scheme was intended for the tribal areas of various states in the country where, the level of food insecurity and starvation is much higher and children are sold due to acute poverty of the parents. Mid-day Meal Scheme is perceived as a major means to impart positive habits among the children and in educating them on the importance of health, sanitation and socialization. It is also seen as a factor for economic support to poor parents and educating them about the value of education instead of sending their children for meager daily earnings. More importantly, it was aimed to facilitate and increase the school participation among the underprivileged children which would lead to their educational as well as economic upliftment. Further, the Mid-day Meal Scheme promises to provide each child one third of the daily nutrient requirement in the form of cooked meal to combat his/her food and nutritional deficiencies. The Mid day Meal Scheme is the India's second largest food security programme. However, there are many school meal or feeding programmes introduced in different countries according to their indispensability.

Review of Literature

Early Childhood Education has a salutary effect in reducing the dropout rate. Children who attend pre-primary classes before joining primary classes achieve slightly higher in class 5th. Mid-day Meal is only scheme that attracts children towards school and pre-primary education and this is the best remedy to deal with the problems of wastage and stagnation (Garg, 1985). Mid-day Meal Scheme has a wide nutritional success, "supplementary feeding is perhaps the optimal way of raising food intake". The meal scheme has made some headway in upgrading the nutritional levels of school goers. Mid-day Meals are conducive to improved education in India (Harriss, 1991).

In spite of universalisation of Mid-day Meal Scheme, many schools still lack infrastructure facilities like cooking sheds, storerooms, latrines etc. (Cheriyian, *et al.* 2007). When children sit with the empty stomach in the classroom, they cannot focus on learning. Mid-day Meal programme had proved to be an effective means to check high dropout rates of children from economically weaker sections while also addressing their nutritional needs. It is sometimes argued that in the case of children of poor households, the school meal may become a substitute rather than a supplement for the home meals. A Mid-day Meal is an important instrument for combating classroom hunger and promoting better learning (Mishra, 2010). In poor countries like India school feeding programmes serve as an incentive for parents to enroll their children. They ensure higher attendance and reduce dropout rates. These programmes increase the possibility of retaining children in school for a longer period during day and thereby increasing the learning opportunities for them (Kumar, 2003). Mid-day Meals provide an excellent opportunity for female employment in rural areas and liberating working women from the burden of having to feed the children at home during the day. Mid-day Meal Programme had helped in undermining prejudices by creating an atmosphere of sitting together and sharing meals in schools. School feeding programme is a direct approach to improve the nutritional status of rapid development requiring social nutritional requirements (Goyal, 2003). Mid-day Meal helps the malnourished children to overcome short term hunger and thereby increase their concentration of learning inside the classroom. It not only takes care of the dietary gap but can also be effective in ensuring that short term hunger does not inhibit their capacity of learn. In poor countries like India school feeding programmes serve an incentive for parents to enroll their children in the schools. This programme increases the possibility of retaining children in the school for a longer period during a day and thereby increases the learning opportunities for them (Sharma, 2003). The children are considered as a backbone of nation. India has a largest population of school going children. A majority of them share the socio-economic deprivation of their parents, and do not have access to essential requirements of nutrition, healthcare and learning opportunities (Remesh, 2011). The present study has been undertaken with an objective to evaluate the impact of Mid-day Meal on school attendance and to assess the nutritional status of children.

Methodology

The data for the study has been collected from primary as well as secondary sources. The survey was conducted in various areas of District Pulwama. A total number of 200 students and 8 teachers were purposively selected for the study. The respondents were students chosen randomly from 1st to 8th standard in selected schools of District Pulwama and one teacher being the incharge of such schools for mid day meal scheme. The main in-

formation was collected through the structured questionnaire and thereby the data collected is tabulated, analyzed and interpreted as per the needs of the study.

Result and Discussion

The effectiveness of Mid-day Meal can very well address several pivotal problems. The problem like poverty of parents, difficulty to reach distant schools, inadequate transport facilities are the factors responsible for dropout in schools also.

Table 1: Assessment of Mid-Day Meal

Statement	Percentage Response
Supply of Mid-day Meal on time	75
Providing vegetables and pulses three times a week	89
Providing salad once in a week	50
Providing fruits twice in a week	50
Students finishes all the food being provided	87.5
Proper storage facility	87.6
Proper condition of hygiene	100
Facility of drinking water	100

Table 1 displays that according to the information provided by the teachers only 75% of the schools get the supply for Mid-day Meal on time and rest 25% were still lacking this facility. 87.6% schools have the proper storage facilities and remaining 12.4% schools are lacking the facility for storing the raw materials for Mid-day Meal in their schools. In response to question related to hygiene of ingredients (stones, insects and other impurities from the food grains) and places where food is being cooked and served shows that all schools have a proper place for keeping food items in proper hygienic conditions. The analysis shows that all the schools have the proper arrangement for cooking and serving Mid-day Meal under good hygienic conditions. Also in response to question related to facility of drinking water depicts that 100% schools have the good facility of drinking water in addition to having this drinking water kept under possible sanitary conditions in all these schools. According to the information of the teachers 87.5% of the students consume all the food which is being provided to them, while as rest 12.5% students do not finish their food. In response to question related to schools providing vegetables and pulses three times a week shows that all the schools are providing vegetables three times in a week to the students. All the schools are providing pulses three times in a week and egg twice in a week to the students. 50% schools provide salad once in a week and rest 50% schools are not providing salad to their students. It also indicates that 50% schools are providing fruit to the students. Attendance percentage of 87.5% in schools was increased than before and in remaining 12.5% schools no change was found.

The clinical assessment of the beneficiaries, as observed depicted that 98.44% respondents had a normal face while as 1.56% respondents had white patches on their faces. 96.88% respondents had normal eyes, 3.12% had dry pale eyes and also had the lack of lusture in their eyes. Nobody was found with the bitots spot in their eyes. 71.88% of the beneficiary children had normal teeth, 9.38% had white patches due to lack of calcium and 4.69% had the dental cavities. Clinical assessment of gums of the beneficiaries shows that 93.75% had normal gums and rest 6.25% had sponginess, softness and bleeding in their gums. So far assessment of nails of the beneficiaries is concerned, 89.06% were found with normal nails and the rest of them had white spot and spoon shaped nails.

In response to question related to students coming school regularly and getting Mid-day Meal indicated that the students were attending the school regularly, it shows positive effect on education. It was further revealed that the students are getting the benefit of Mid-day Meal regularly in the schools and also shows that Mid-day Meal is the only scheme that attracts the children towards the schools.. It was also observed that all the students were used to wash their hands before eating food.

Conclusion

All the Government schools are providing Mid-day Meal to the children as per the norms. The findings of the study revealed that due to this scheme there was an increase in attendance in maximum schools. The present study shows that the facilities like proper drinking water and availability of utensils were present in these schools but still a number of schools were lacking the same facilities. Government is providing supply for Mid-day Meal free of cost but about 25% schools do not get the supply on time. In this study students are satisfied with the food being provided to them and thereby attend their school regularly. This scheme has reduced the dropout rates in Government schools.

REFERENCE

Basu, Kaushik, Pulin B. and Ranjan Ray Nayak, (2003). Market and Governance, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. | Cheriyan, G. Sharma, K. C., Murthy, J.V.R., Agarwal, S. and Shah, P. (2007). "An assessment of the Mid Day Meal (MDM) Scheme in South Asia". Sustainable Development Department Rajasthan India. (354). | Garg, V. P. and Dass, J.R. (1985). "Impact of Pre-primary Education on Dropout, Stagnation and Academic Performance". Education Department Municipal Corporation New Dehli. (97-98). | Goyal and Dreze (2003). "Future of Mid-Day Meals," Economic and Political Weekly, 1: 4673-4683. | Harriss, B. (1991). "Child Nutrition and Poverty in South India". Concept Publishing Company, New Dehli. (245-256). | Kumar, R. (2003). Research Methodology Pearson's Education, Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd. | Mishra, N. (2010). "Evaluation Study on Mid Day Meal Programme in Meghalaya". Council for Social Development. New Dehli. (56-57). | Remesh, JA (2011). "A comparative study to assess the impact of Midday Meal Programme on nutritional status of school children." Indra Nursing Collage Falnir Manglore. (572). | Sharma, R, Rao, H.D (2003). "Impact of Mid-Day Meal on programme educational and nutritional status of school. Going Children in Andra Pradesh". Asian Pac Journal of Public Health, Vol. 1. (48-52). |