



A study on the impact of mid-day meal programme in selected primary schools of Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh

¹ Anmol Lamba, ² Veena Garg

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Food and Nutrition, Bhagat Phool Singh Institute of Higher Learning, BPSMV, Sonipat, Haryana, India

² Dean, Faculty of Science, Department of Food and Nutrition, Bhagat Phool Singh Institute of Higher Learning, BPSMV, Sonipat, Haryana, India

Abstract

The Mid-Day Meal Programme is a school meal programme which is launched by the government of India to improve the nutritional status of school going children. It involves provision of hot cooked meal to school-children on all working days. Its main objective is to improve the effectiveness of primary education by improving the nutritional status of children. It is important to know that it is not merely the long term effects of school meal on the nutritional status but it also has short term effects such as better attention, memory and learning ability. The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of mid day meal programme on enrolment, retention and dropout of primary school children in Bijnor. MDM and non MDM schools were selected by random sampling method. The findings of this study reveal that the schools with Mid-Day Meal Scheme had more percentage of enrolment and retention of students in comparison to that of schools without Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

Keywords: midday meal, enrolment, retention, nutritional status

Introduction

Education plays a vital and important role in fulfilling the basic need of a common man. Education is a process through which a child is made capable to attend necessary competencies and skills to face the challenges in life to survive and to make a struggle for excellence ^[1]. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years is the constitutional commitment and it is estimated that Elementary school children (6-14 years) form about 20% of the total population ^[2].

Most of the children from low socio-economic society agonize from nutrition, more often they drop out from schools at an early age which unswervingly affects their personality development ^[3]. Health status has a significant impact on the development of children and on their education prospects. Malnourished children or children with poor health often have more limited capacity to pay attention in school and perform poorer as a result, have higher than- average absenteeism rates, often fall behind at school, and ultimately may be at greater risk of dropping out of school ^[4]. Mid-day meal scheme was started as a centrally sponsored scheme on 15th August, 1995 with the aim of universalization of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously impact on Nutrition of Students in Primary Classes. It involves provision of lunch/snacks/meal free of cost to school children on school working days ^[5]. The present study has been elucidated to assess the impact of Mid Day Meal on enrolment, retention and dropout of primary school children in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh.

Methodology

Study Area

The present study was conducted in Dhampur Tehsil of Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh.

Selection of sample

Sample is a smaller representation of a larger population. Dhampur Tehsil, Bijnor district is taken to be the sample and 6 primary schools of said Tehsil were selected for the study. The sample was taken on a random basis. Among them three were Government primary schools (with MDM scheme) and other three were non government primary school (without MDM scheme) of same geographical area.

Data Collection

A predesigned and pretested questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. Data regarding enrolment, attendance, retention and dropout of children was collected from school records.

Result

Table 1: Total Numbers of Students enrolled in Schools (without MDM scheme) in the Academic Year 2016-17

Class	Enrolment (Number)
I	74
II	68
III	71
IV	73
V	76

Table 2: Total Numbers of Students enrolled in Schools (with MDM scheme) in the Academic Year 2016-17

Class	Enrolment (Number)
I	82
II	87
III	78
IV	80
V	88

Table 3: Retention of Students in Schools (without MDM)

Class	Retention of Students in Schools (without MDM)
I	63
II	59
III	60
IV	57
V	61

Table 4: Retention of Students in Schools (with MDM)

Class	Retention of Students in Schools (with MDM)
I	74
II	80
III	72
IV	73
V	79

Table 7: Comparison between Dropout of Schools (without MDM) and Schools (with MDM)

Class	Percentage of Dropout in Schools (without MDM)	Percentage of Dropout in Schools (with MDM)	Percentage of Reduction of Dropout
I	14.86	9.75	5.11
II	13.23	8.04	5.19
III	15.49	7.69	7.80
IV	21.91	8.75	13.16
V	19.73	10.22	9.51

Table 7 reveals that more number of students dropped out in schools (without MDM) in comparison to that of schools with Mid Day Meal programme. This shows that mid day meal scheme helps in arresting the dropout rate in primary school.

Difference in Enrolment and Retention between Schools (with MDM) and Schools (without MDM)

In schools (with MDM) the difference between enrolment and retention is low in comparison with that of schools (without MDM). After analyzing the data it is concluded that in the schools (with MDM) the enrolment and retention of primary school children has been significantly increased.

Discussion

Mid-Day Meal Scheme is one of the largest centrally funded scheme which provide free one-time meal to government school and government aided school children^[5]. This scheme was initiated on the philosophy that “when children have to sit in class with empty stomach, they cannot focus on learning.” Mid day meal seeks to provide for each school child roughly a third of the daily nutrient requirement in the form of hot fresh cooked meal^[6].

The present study concluded that Mid Day Meal has positively impacted the enrolment and retention of primary school children in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh. Almost same

Table 5: Retention Table for Schools (without MDM)

Class	Enrolment	Retention	Dropout	% of Dropout
I	74	63	11	14.86%
II	68	59	09	13.23%
III	71	60	11	15.49%
IV	73	57	16	21.91%
V	76	61	15	19.73%

Table 5 shows that there was higher dropout rate and lower retention rate in schools where Mid-Day Meal Programme was not followed.

Table 6: Retention Table for Schools (with MDM)

Class	Enrolment	Retention	Dropout	% of Dropout
I	82	74	08	9.75%
II	87	80	07	8.04%
III	78	72	06	7.69%
IV	80	73	07	8.75%
V	88	79	09	10.22%

Table 6 reveals that the dropout rate reduced and retention rate increased in Schools with Mid-Day Meal Scheme in comparison to that of schools without Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

result has also been reported by Sen (2005) in Birbhum District of West Bengal^[7] and Julia (2005) in Udaipur district^[8]. A study conducted by Biswajit Nath & Indrajit Nath (2015) in Birbhum district also revealed that the schools with Mid Day Meal have high enrolment and retention rate^[9].

Conclusion

In a nutshell it can be concluded that the Mid-day meal Scheme in Bijnor district had a positive impact on education by increasing enrolment rate of students in primary schools. It also improved retention rate of school children and arrest dropout rate besides providing nutritious meals to growing children. The meal is drawing the children to school particularly those from poor families.

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