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RURAL AND URBAN PARENTS' OPINION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MID-DAY MEAL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract:

Midday-Meal is a free school meal provided to a child during a school break at no cost. Very few countries provided these to all school children regardless of their ability to pay but many governments in developing countries especially, are increasingly implementing free school meals to improve attendance rates and reduce malnutrition. In India, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) scheme, deployed nationwide by 1998, 104 million children were covered in 1.6 million schools during 2013-14. It is an excellent initiative taken by the Govt. for school-level children. In the present paper, the researcher wants to compare the opinion of the rural parents and the opinion of urban parents regarding Midday-Meal Programme at elementary level.

Key words: Midday-meal, free school meal, developing counties, malnutrition, NP-NSPE, initiative.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Primary school children (6 to 14 years) form about 20% of the total population. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years is the constitutional commitment. It is estimated that about 40% of children dropout of primary school. National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) surveys (2000) indicate that about 70% of these children are undernourished and there is about 30% deficit in energy consumption and over 75% of the children have dietary micronutrient deficit of about 50%. Nutrition support to primary education is considered as a means to achieve the objective of providing free and compulsory universal primary education of satisfactory quality to all the children below the age of 14 years by giving a boost to universalisation of primary education through increased enrolment, improved school attendance and retention and promoting nutritional status of primary school simultaneously with children from all castes and communities eating together, it is also a means of bringing about better social integration. The Midday-Meal Scheme is a school meal programme of the Government of India designed to improve the nutritional status of school-age children nationwide. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in Government, Government Aided, Local Body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and Alternate Innovative Education Centres, Madrasa & Maqtabs Supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the Ministry of Labour. The programme entered the planning stages in 2001 and was implemented in 2004. The central and state Governments share the cost of this scheme, with the centre providing 75% and the state's 25%. Initially, the scheme was implemented to provide food to students in class I-V of government, government aided and local body run school. In October 2007, the scheme included students in upper-primary classes of 6-8, under this programme the nutritional guidelines for minimum amount of food and calorie content per child per day are:

Entitlement norm per child per day under MDM

Item	Primary Class(I-V)	Upper primary (class VI-VIII)
Calories	450	700
Protein(in grams)	12	20
Rice/wheat(in grams)	100	150
Dal (in grams)	20	30
Vegetables(in grams)	50	75
Oil and Fat(in grams)	05	7.5

Source: Annual Report, 2011-12, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

Objectives of the:

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand rural parents' view regarding mid-day meal.
- To understand urban parents' view regarding mid-day meal.
- To compare rural and urban parents' view regarding mid-day meal.
- To know the acceptability of mid-day meal to the society.

Research questions:

The researcher has conducted the study on the basis of the following research questions –

- I. What do the rural parents think about the mid-day-meal?
- II. What do the urban parents think about the mid-day-meal?
- III. What is the acceptance-level of MDM to rural and urban society?
- IV. Does MDM play a significant role to society?
- V. Do the rural parents and urban parents bear the same opinion regarding MDM?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

The research presents his limited acquaintance with some of the related studies as under- The major findings of the PROBE (Public Report on Basic Education) report indicated that 80% of households reported that children get cooked mid-day meal in schools and children enjoy varied menu. Good practices like washing hands before eating & after eating are imparted in the schools.

Research findings (2010) of pratchi trust of prof. Amartya Kumar Sen revealed that unlike many other Government Programmes, implementation of MDM has been a success throughout the country. Though the quality of food needs to be improved, it must be said that with active participation of the beneficiaries, it has become a community programme. Supreme Court commissioners undertake extensive review of various welfare schemes through field visits. They have observed that the MDM is widely acknowledged as one of the most successful Schemes of GOI.

III. METHODOLOGY:

In order to achieve the objectives of the present study, survey method was applied to access the parents' view (rural & urban) on mid-day meal. The collected data are analyzed by using percentage and the decision is taken on the basis of the same.

Tools used: An attitude inventory questionnaire for rural & urban parents' view on mid-day-meal was developed by the researcher. It was used and standardized by the present researcher.

Population & sample:

The rural and urban parents formed the population of this investigation. The sample consists of 100 parents, out of which 50 samples represent the rural and 50 samples represent the urban parents. More than 70% rural guardian belongs to SC, ST and Muslim community and most of them are illiterate or ordinarily educated. The investigator does not follow the randomization process for selection of sample. Researcher follows the purposive sampling procedure for the selection of samples.

IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA:

Depending upon the primary data survey, a comparative analysis between the opinion of rural and urban guardian on the effectiveness of mid-day-meal programme, is presented below. Here the Rural Parents and the Urban Parents are denoted by R_P & U_P respectively.

- **Increase sociatability:**

Regarding increasement of sociatability among students, the rural parents (R_P) and urban parents (U_P) give their opinion as under

Table-1

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P
Responses %	93%	45.5%	00%	54.5%	7%	00%

The above table shows that, 93% rural population thought that the mid-day meal has the power to increase sociatability among the students, and no rural population gave adverse opinion. Only 7% guardian remained silent. On the other hand, more than 50% urban population (54.5%) thought that the mid-day meal programme plays no role regarding sociatability of students and only 45.5% urban population gave its adverse opinion.

- **Decrease quality of class-room T-L activity:**

Table -2

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P
Responses %	6.5%	72%	92%	22.5%	1.5%	5.5%

From the above information, it is clear that 92% rural population thought that MDM does not decrease the quality of Teaching-Learning (T-L) activity; only 6.5% population thought so. But in urban area 72% populations thought that after taking Mid-day meal, the quality of class-room Teaching-Learning activity is automatically decreased. Only 22.5% urban population did not think such as and 5.5% population gave no responses.

- **Hindrance to Education Process:**

Table -3

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P
Responses %	14.5%	71.5%	85.5%	22%	00%	6.5%

Table shows that, more than (87.5%) thought that MDM disturbs the education process and only 14.5%

80% rural population does not hinder the education population thought that

MDM disturbs the education process. But 71.5% urban population thought that MDM is a barrier to smooth education. Process and only 22% population did not think such as and 6.5% urban population gave no responses.

- **Fostering social equality:**

Table -4

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P	R_P	U_P
Responses %	34%	32.5%	54.5%	56%	11.5%	11.5%

Below 40% population from both rural & urban area, thought that MDM programme has a minimum role to decrease social inequality. And more than 50% population from both areas assumed that MDM does not foster social equality. 11.5% population of both rural and urban remained silence.

- **Quality full food:**

Table -5

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P
Responses %	27%	6.5%	64.5%	93.5%	8.5%	00%

In this dimension, only 27% population of rural area thought that, MDM provides quality full food, but more than 60% rural population thought that, foods supplied by MDM are not quality full. 8.5% population did not give their opinion. The urban population also gave the same opinion. Here the condition is poorer. Only 6.5% urban population thought that the food is quality full, but more than 90% of urban population thought that the MDM programme provides very poor quality food.

- **Improve nutritional status : _**

Table -6

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P
Responses %	35%	18.5%	55%	81.5%	10%	00%

Table shows that only 35% rural populations are infavour of that the MDM improves children's nutrition, but 55% population gave their adverse opinion in this dimension. In case of urban sector, more than 80% population thought that MDM has played no role to improve children's nutrition and only poor percent of population (18.5%) thought that the MDM does so.

- **Increase the rate of daily attendance:**

Table -7

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P
Responses %	92.5%	52.5%	7.5%	35%	00%	12.5%

92.5% rural population believed that the MDM must increase the rate of daily school attendance, and only a minimum percent of population did not think so. In urban area, 52.5% population were infavour of that the MDM increase the rate of daily attendance, but 35% population thought that it has no influence upon the rate of daily percentage, because they seemed that the urban children's don't depend on MDM . 12.5% population remained silence.

- **Improve enrolment:**

Table -8

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P
Responses %	91.5%	50%	8.5%	50%	00%	00%

From the table, it is clear that more than 90% rural population thought that the student's enrolments are significantly improved after launching MDM programme.

In case of urban population, they are divided significantly by equal-proportion, i.e. half of the population thought that MDM does not influence in improvement of student's enrolment, particularly in urban area, and the rest half thought its opposite.

- **Encourage poor children:**

Table -9

	Yes		No		Indifferent	
	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P	R _P	U _P
Responses %	100%	100%	00%	00%	00%	00%

This table exhibits that 100% population from both rural & urban area gave the same opinion. Both think that MDM plays a very significant role to poor children. It is very useful to them. It encourages poor children to go school. No one gives the opposite opinion and no one remains silence in this dimension.

V. CONCLUSION:

The Mid-day meal scheme for children is implemented to eliminate class room hunger, increase school enrolment, increase daily school attendance, improve socialization among students, address malnutrition, etc. It is found from the research work that, the purposes of MDM are achieved to a great extent, particularly in rural area. The guardian of rural area and the guardian of urban area are different in large scale in the opinion towards MDM. Rural parents are more satisfied to this programme. They take it in a very friendly manner. Most of the villagers in our country are very poor. Their sons and daughters get poor education, as they have to work at home or outside the home. These poor children are bounded to become an earning member of the family from the very early age. But when the Mid-day meal has launched, these rural children began to go to school for getting meal at lunch. The rural parents want to provide their child to school regularly. As a result daily attendance, as well as class room hunger, enrolments are gradually increased. The rural parents are very delightful and they bear positive attitude to this programme.

On the other hand, a large number of urban parents are indifferent to Mid-day meal programme. They and their child don't give too much importance to MDM, because they have the monetary power. So the urban and rural parents differ significantly in their opinion towards Mid-day meal programme. However the opinion of the parents, it is no doubt that the Mid-day meal programme in India is one of the most effective programmes to ensure children have better food and subsequently concentrate better in class. In India where many children are affected with malnutrition, Mid-day meal scheme for children is a way out from the issue. It is really beneficial and helpful for the poor learners.

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