4

Attitude of Primary Teachers towards Mid Day Meal Scheme

Jyoti Pandey*

Abstract

Cooked midday meal is mandatory to be provided to all children studying in government and government-aided primary and upper primary schools in all States of India. The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) was initiated on the adage that "when children have to sit with an empty stomach in class, they cannot focus on learning". Children are the future of the country. Education and health are the two basic requirements of children. This study reveals the attitude of primary school teachers about the scheme. A total of 180 upper primary school teachers from Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh were selected as sample and were given an attitude scale regarding the implementation of MDMS in their respective schools. It was found that the scheme has led to an increase in the enrolment and attendance rate in schools. Besides, it has contributed in retaining the classroom strength. However, it has adversely affected the teaching–learning process in schools as teachers have an additional burden of monitoring the supplies for the preparation of midday meals and overseeing their distribution among the students. Therefore, it is needed to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of teachers in the implementation of MDMS in schools.

Introduction

The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), one of the largest schoolchildren feeding programmes in India, caters to their nutritional needs. With the objectives to meet the nutritional requirements of school-going children and to increase enrolment, retention and attendance rate in primary and upper primary schools,

* *Assistant Professor*, Faculty of Education, MJP Rohilkhand University, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh

a centrally-sponsored scheme called the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (commonly known as the Mid Day Meal Scheme) was launched on 15 August 1995. In an order dated 28 November 2001, the Supreme Court of India directed all States and Union Territories to start providing cooked midday meals in primary schools within six months. The scheme was introduced for students of upper primary classes in government and government-run schools in 2006–07.

Review of Related Studies and Literature

A centrally-sponsored survey was conducted on the 'Future of Mid Day Meals' (2003) in government and government-aided schools in three States — Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Rajasthan. The aim of the study was to examine the implementation of the scheme and its success in the schools in the three States. Two nutrition related achievements emerged. Firstly, midday meal helped end classroom hunger among students. Secondly, the meal helped reduce child malnutrition in many areas.

The National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, in 2004 studied the impact of midday meal on enrolment, attendance and dropout rate in schools, and its impact on the nutritional status, as well as, academic achievement of students. The results of the study indicated better enrolment ($p < 0.05$) and attendance ($p < 0.001$), higher retention with reduced dropout rate ($p < 0.001$), a marginally higher scholastic performance and marginally higher growth performance of children of schools, where the MDMS was being implemented.

The report of another study conducted jointly by the University of Rajasthan and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2005 revealed that introduction of menu-based midday meal had improved the enrolment and attendance rate of students in schools of Rajasthan. The report further revealed that midday meal had also contributed to social equity as children sat together in a common area in the school and shared a common meal irrespective of religion, caste and class.

The National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development in 2006 also conducted a study on the impact of midday meal scheme in Karnataka and found that midday meal had improved attendance in majority of government and government-aided schools in the State and reduced absenteeism and dropout rate, especially, in the primary classes.

In another study, Afridi (Syracuse University, March 2007), and Graham and Cherr (2008) concluded that teachers perceived school meals as an effective nutritional tool to promote healthy eating habits in students. They believed that apart from meeting the basic nutritional requirements of school-going children and encouraging healthy eating habits in them, midday meal also helped enhance their academic performance

and physical activity. They found that midday meal attracted students to attend school.

Nambiar, et al. (2010) conducted a study in schools of Baroda district in Gujarat. They found that cooked midday meals being provided to students approximately contained 300 calories and 8–12 grams of protein. They also found that 69 per cent of the parents felt that their children had gained weight because of eating midday meal in schools, while 65 per cent felt that their children suffered less from common ailments as midday meal met their nutrition needs.

According to Chugh (2014), teachers in all sampled schools of Maharashtra reported that the MDMS had considerably increased their workload. Apart from teaching students and managing various classroom activities, they were also responsible for monitoring the purchase of ingredients necessary for preparing midday meal and its distribution among children.

Lalita and Rekhi (2016) studied about nutritional contribution of midday meal as per quality norms in upper primary classes of Delhi schools. They suggested the authorities concerned to increase the amount of fat, green leafy vegetables and fruits rich in vitamin C in the meals.

Teachers and parents opined that midday meal met the nutritional requirements of children and helped them stay fit. They shared that it also improved the enrolment and attendance rate in schools. Many of them demanded that better quality cereals be used in preparing the meals. Besides, fruits and milk should be included in the meal. However, some felt that drinking water and toilet facilities were more important than midday meal.

Lone and Nazim (2017) compared the anthropometric measurements, intellectual and social development of midday meal and non-midday meal beneficiaries in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir. The study concludes that non-midday meal beneficiaries showed better nutritional status in terms of anthropometric measurements compared to those who received midday meals. However, the benefits in terms of intellectual and social development were not evident in children who received midday meals and those who did not.

Kaur (2018) revealed no significant difference in the attitude of teachers about providing midday meal on the basis of gender and locality.

All these parameters need to be further improved upon and strengthened to fill the nutrient gaps to ensure that MDMS has a positive impact on the health and mind of schoolchildren.

Statement of the Problem

The study tries to find out the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS being implemented in several government-aided and government schools of Bareilly district in Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives

- To assess the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS
- To compare the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of gender
- To compare the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of age group
- To compare the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of stream

Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of gender.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of age group.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of stream.

Sample

A total of 180 upper primary school teachers from 45 government and government-aided schools across 15 blocks in Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh were selected as sample. Stratified random sampling technique was used to conduct the study. Three schools were selected from each block and four teachers were selected from each school.

The sample has been categorised on the basis of gender, age group and stream. It consists of male (N=98) and female (N=82) teachers. The average age was taken as 35 years. On the basis of age group, the sample teachers were categorised into two groups — above average or senior teachers (more than 35 years) and below average or junior teachers (less than 35 years). Senior teachers (N=85) and junior teachers (N=95) formed the sample. In case of stream-wise division, the sample for science stream teachers is (N=70) and arts (N=110).

Psychometric Instrument

A self-developed attitude scale was used to collect data from the teachers. The attitude scale consisted of 30 statements, which covered six dimensions, namely role of teachers, teaching–learning process, attendance of students, nutrition of students, conversion cost and execution of MDMS. The reliability of the tool has been measured by test–re-test method, which is 0.75. The validity coefficient of the tool is 0.86. The scale also consisted of face and content validity. The tool contained both positive and negative items for scoring procedure opted (5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive items, and 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 for negative items).

Table 1: Comparison in the attitude of teachers about MDMS on the basis of gender

S. No.	Dimensions	Male teachers (N=98)		Female teachers (N=82)		t–Ratio
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Role of teachers	13.08	1.72	12.61	1.82	1.78
2.	Teaching–learning process	20.58	2.30	20.72	2.03	0.42
3.	Attendance of students	15.51	2.49	15.20	2.97	0.77
4.	Nutrition of students	11.43	2.13	11.24	2.39	0.55
5.	Conversion cost	20.87	1.43	21.15	1.42	1.31
6.	Execution of MDMS	16.36	2.73	15.39	2.56	2.44*

**Significant at 0.05 level*

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data regarding the attitude of male and female teachers about MDMS of the basis of gender is depicted in Table 1. The result reveals that out of the six dimensions, significant difference among male and female teachers is found on one dimension only, i.e., execution of MDMS, for which the t-ratio is 2.44, mean values 16.36 and 15.39, respectively. The corresponding standard deviations for male and female teachers are 2.73 and 2.56, respectively, which implies that both male and female teachers do not have similar attitude regarding the execution of the scheme. Hence, the first hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of gender is partially accepted and rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

The result of the study is similar to Chugh (2014), who concluded that executing MDMS is difficult for teachers as the scheme had considerably increased their workload. The results of the study also corroborated on the remaining five dimensions with Kaur (2018), who reported no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers on MDMS.

Table 2: Comparison in the attitude of teachers about MDMS on the basis of age group

S. No.	Dimensions	Senior teachers (N=85)		Junior teachers (N=95)		t–Ratio
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Role of teachers	12.91	1.84	12.83	1.73	0.28
2.	Teaching–learning process	20.75	2.25	20.55	2.11	0.63

3.	Attendance of students	15.52	2.62	15.23	2.81	0.70
4.	Nutrition of students	10.87	2.26	11.77	2.17	2.72*
5.	Conversion cost	21.19	1.38	20.82	1.45	1.74
6.	Execution of MDMS	16.09	3.00	15.76	2.37	0.84

**Significant at 0.05 level.*

Data regarding comparison in attitude between above average age or senior teachers and below average age or junior teachers about MDMS is shown in Table 2. It is analysed that out of the six dimensions, significant difference is found only on one dimension, i.e., nutrition of students, for which the t–ratio is 2.72. The mean values for senior and junior teachers are 10.87 and 11.77, respectively. The corresponding standard deviations are 2.26 and 2.17 for senior and junior teachers, respectively, which reveal the significant difference between them about MDMS. Hence, the second hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the attitude of upper primary school teachers about MDMS on the basis of age group is partially accepted and rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

The result of the study is similar to what Lalita and Rekhi (2016) found in their study conducted in upper primary classes of Delhi government schools. They had said that the quality of midday meals being provided to students in Delhi schools need to be improved by increasing the amount of fat, green leafy vegetables and fruits rich in vitamin C.

Table 3 reveals the attitude of teachers as regards to MDMS on the basis of stream. It shows that no significant difference was found among teachers on the basis of stream.

Table 3: Comparison in the attitude of teachers about MDMS on the basis of stream

S. No.	Dimensions	Science stream teachers (N=70)		Arts stream teachers (N=110)		t–Ratio
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1.	Role of teachers	13.14	1.91	12.69	1.67	1.67
2.	Teaching–learning process	20.51	2.42	20.73	2.01	0.64
3.	Attendance of students	15.79	2.04	15.10	3.05	1.66
4.	Nutrition of students	11.33	2.31	11.35	2.22	0.08
5.	Conversion cost	20.90	1.43	21.05	1.43	0.71
6.	Execution of MDMS	16.39	2.19	15.62	2.93	1.88

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that significant difference in the attitude of teachers about MDMS was found only on one dimension in case of gender and age group, while no significant difference was found on the basis of stream.

Though the scheme is helping achieve the goals of Universalisation of Elementary Education, it is important that it is implemented in a manner that it does not hinder the teaching–learning process in schools. Teachers must be made free from the additional burden of monitoring the purchase of ingredients required for preparing midday meal and its distribution among children. Besides, problems related to maintenance of records, lack of adequate teaching staff, time management, appropriate transaction of the teaching–learning process and making midday meal arrangements, etc., pose obstacles in fulfilling the objectives of the scheme. Therefore, to implement this scheme in a more effective manner, appropriate arrangements must be made.

Besides, incentives, appreciation and rewards must be given to teaching and non-teaching staff so as to encourage them to carry out midday meal duties without feeling burdened. Time-to-time attention must also be paid to other aspects, such as financial resources, working hours, workforce requirement, etc., for the smooth and effective implementation of the programme. It is important that attention is paid to what Chugh (2014) suggested. She said that it is necessary to define the role and responsibility of teachers in the implementation of MDMS as apart from teaching, they are also responsible for monitoring the purchase of ingredients required for preparing the meal and its distribution, leaving them burdened.

REFERENCES

Afridi, F. 2007. *The Impact of School Meals on School Participation: Evidence from Rural India*. Syracuse University, New York.

Buch, M. B. 1992. *Fifth survey of Educational Research*. National Council of Educational Research and Training. New Delhi. Vol. 1.

Centre for Equity Studies. 2003. Future of Mid Day Meals in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Karnataka. New Delhi.

Chugh, S. 2014. *A Study of Best Practices in the Implementation of Mid Day Meal Programme*. National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

Graham, H. and S. Z. Cherry. 2008. California teachers perceive school garden as an effective nutrition tool to promote healthful eating habits. *Journal of American Dietetic Association*. Vol. 105. No. 11, pp. 1797–800.

JAIN, J. AND S. MIHIR. 2005. Mid Day Meal Scheme in Madhya Pradesh: Reading Materials and Views of Experts. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Sameeksha Trust. Mumbai. Vol. 50. No. 48.

KAUR, R. 2018. Attitude of teachers about Mid Day Meal Scheme in relation with gender and locality. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Science*. Vol. 8. No. 2.

LALITA AND T. REKHI. 2016. Nutritional contribution of Mid Day Meal (MDM) as per quality norms at upper primary classes. *International Journal of Scientific and Public Research Publication*. Indian Society for Health and Advanced Research. Ahmedabad. Vol. 6. No. 10.

LONE, A. Q. AND P. NAZIM. 2017. A comparative study on mid day meal and non-mid day meal beneficiaries of Kulgam District. *International Journal of Food and Nutritional Science*. Wolters Kluwer-Medknow Publications. Mumbai. Vol. 6. No. 3.

NAMBIAR VANISHA S., ET AL. 2010. *Effectiveness and Efficacy of Mid Day Meal Scheme — The Akshay Patra Foundation*. Baroda, Gujarat.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC COOPERATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT. 2006. Report on Mid Day Meal Scheme in Karnataka — A Study. India.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT. 2013. Impact of mid day meal on the nutritional status of school-going children of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. Hyderabad, Telangana.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT TO PRIMARY EDUCATION. 2004. Guidelines, Ministry of Human Resource Development. ICMR, Jamia Osmania, Hyderabad, Telangana.

UNICEF. 2009. Tracking Progress on Child and Maternal Nutrition: A Survival and Development Priority. New York.

UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN AND UNICEF. 2005. A Situation Analysis of Mid-Day Meal Programme. Rajasthan.

VISWANATHAN, B. 2006. Access to nutritious meal programme — Evidence from 1999–2000. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Sameeksha Trust. Mumbai. Vol. 38.