

Impact of Mid-Day Meals on Children's Health in Maharashtra**Shaikh Farroq Shaik Pirsb**

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Abstract :

The mid-day meal scheme, known as PM Poshan is an important school nutrition program in India. This research paper swipes the impact of mid-day meals on children's health in Maharashtra. The study focuses on nutritional status, physical growth, immunity, school attendance and educational performance among primary and upper primary school children. Evidence from government reports and academic studies suggest that mid-day meals have improved nutritional intake and school participation while implementation challenges such as food safety and menu quality remain.

Key words : mid-day meal, children's health nutrition.

Introduction :

Child nutrition is directly linked to physical growth, mental development and academic performance in rural and economically weaker sections of Maharashtra many children depend on school meals for daily nutrition.

The mid-day meal scheme was introduced to address classroom hunger and improve children's health.

Under PM Poshan children studying in government and aided schools receive cooked meals during school hours Maharashtra has been one of the major implementing states under this programme.

2) Rational : Maharashtra specific menu of mid-day meal

In Maharashtra in 2024 introduced on expanded school meal menu with around 15 recipes. Report mentioned inclusion of

1. Sprouts
2. Dal and legumes
3. Vegetables
4. Rice based meals
5. Occasional sweet dishes
6. Seasonal fruits

Nutritional value :

Primary school children (classes 1st to 5th) children should receive approximately

- Energy – 450 calories
- Protein – 12 gm

- Food quantity per child per day
- Rice / wheat- 100 gm
- Pulses (dal) – 20gm
- Vegetables 50 gm
- Oil / fat 5 gm

These are official PM POSHAN nutrition norms followed across states including Maharashtra.

2) upper primary children (classes 6th to 8th)

1. Energy – 700 calories
2. Protein – 20 grams.
3. Food quantity per child per day.
4. Rice / wheat – 150 gm
5. Pulses – 30 gm
6. Vegetables – 75 gm
7. Oil / fat – 7.5 gm

3) Need of the study :

In many district of Maharashtra malnutrition, are prevalent. And underweight condition among school children among public health concerns. This study helps understand how school meals influences children's health and educational outcomes.

4) Objectives of the study :

1. To study the impact of mid-day meals on children's nutritional status.
2. To examine the effect on physical growth and immunity.
3. To analyze the relationship between mid-day meals and school attendance.

- To identify implementation challenges in Maharashtra

5) Research methodology :

The study is based on secondary data analysis collected from

- Government PM POSHAN reports.
- Maharashtra education reports.
- Public health journals.
- Nutrition research studies.

Review of Performance (01.04.2023 to 30.11.2023)

Coverage of students.

Average number of students covered under the scheme with references to entrench and PAB approval as under.

Stage	Enrolment	PAB	Average no.	% Avg.	% Avg.
		Approval for 2023-24	Of students available meal	Students available meals	Students available meals
				Vis-à-vis enrolment	Vis PAB approval
Primary	59,74,978	5539798	5210818	87 %	94 %
Upper primary	39,17,899	3628678	3429692	88 %	95 %
Total	9892877	9168476	8640510	88 %	94 %

Secretary DOSEAL -cum-Chairman of PAB observe that the coverage of enrolled Students was below 80%. in the district of Hingoli (74%) and Beed (80%) in primary classes and in district Hingoli (70%) and Jalna (77%) in Upper primary classes. He advised the state to ascertain the reasons for low coverage to take corrective measures. The state government is advised to disseminate the approval of the resource to all the field functionaries in the State and district so as to enable all the eligible institutions to ensure that every eligible student is Served hot cooked meals or provided with food security allowance on all school days Irrespective of the approvals of PAB

6) Review of related Literature :

PM POSHAN: A Study of school children found that mid-day meals Contributed positively to nutritional Status and improved anthropometric indicators.

A National Education Study found that children receiving mid-day meals Showed lower School drop out and better retention rates.

Research on nutrition interventions through school feeding also Found improvement in hemoglobin levels and reduction in anemia.

7) Impact of mid-day meals on childrens health in maharashtra.

A) Improvement in Nutritional Status.

Maharashtra's joint Review Mission Found that 95-99% of surveyed children consumed mid-day meals regularly and programme contributed Significantly to their nutrient intake. milk and vegetables outside school was often inadequate making school meals especially important.

B) Better physical growth

Regular intake of balanced meals helps in:

- 1) Healthy weight gain
- 2) Better height growth.
- 3) Increased energy levels
- 4) improved muscle development.

Studies shows School Feeding Positively affects nutritional indicators in Children.

C) Reduction in Anemia and weakness

children receiving fortified or balanced meals show improved hemoglobin levels and reduced anemia risk. This is especially Important in tribal and rural area's of maharashtra.

D) Improved immunity

Nutritious food Containing proteins, iron and vitamins helps strengthen immunity and reduces frequent illness among children.

E) Educational Impact

- 1) Increased attendance: The assurance of meals encourages parents to send Children to School Regularly
- 2) Reduced dropout: Studies Shows that children receiving school meals have lower dropout rates and better school retention.

8) Maharashtra specific challenges:

- 1) Food Safety Issues: In 2025 the maharashtra government issued stricter food safety SOP's after food poisoning incident in schools. These Included food quality checks, storage inspections and meal tasting by school heads.
- 2) Nutrition Quality: In some district Such as Nagpur, egg an important protein source were temporarily discontinued due to budget and logistic issues, though some school reintroduced them through community Support.

9) finding of the Study:

- 1) mid-day meals improve nutritional Intake among school children.
- 2) Regular meals Support better physical growth.
- 3) School attendance increased due to meal availability
- 4) Children from low income families benefit the most.
- 5) food quality monitoring needs continuous improvement.

10) Suggestions:

- 1) Include more protein rich food such as egg pulses and milk.
- 2) Conduct regular health checkup in school.
- 3) Strengthen food hygiene monitoring.
- 4) Include local nutritious food like millet-based meals.
- 5) Include funding and community participation.

11) Conclusion:

The mid-day meal Scheme has made a positive contribution to children's health in Maharashtra. It Supports nutrition, physical growth, school attendance and Social development, continued monitoring menu improvement and food safety Measures can make the program even more effective.

12 References:

- 1) Maharashtra pm POSHAN Joint review mission Report
- 2) International Journal of Community medicine and public Health.
- 3) National Studies on school retention and Nutrition.
- 4) Government reports on PM POSHAN Implementation in Maharashtra.