



## The Availability of Lower Level Implementers in the Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Program on Primary School in Klaten Regency

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the preparedness availability of lower level implementers in executing the Free Nutritious Meals Program in primary schools in Klaten Regency. Although the program has not been officially delivered from government, strong indications suggest its likely implementation farther. The main focus of this research is to identify factors influencing implementers' readiness, challenges encountered, and the support needed to ensure the program's effective execution. A qualitative research approach was employed, utilizing data collection techniques such as interviews, simulation observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that the level of preparedness availability among lower-level implementers remains deficient. This deficiency is influenced by several key factors, including the absence of local government support through socialization, inadequate resource availability, the implementers' capacity and competence, and community participation. Despite the program's planned nature, potential obstacles were identified, including limited facilities, unequal distribution of food supplies, and insufficient technical training for implementers. Furthermore, enhancing community participation is imperative to optimize the quality and sustainability of the program in select schools.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Malnutrition has been a significant issue for both the government and the broader community in Indonesia, particularly among school-aged children. Referred from a report published from World Health Organization (WHO), the prevalence of stunting defined as chronic malnutrition affecting child growth in Indonesia remains high, at approximately 30.8% as of 2021. This means that one in three Indonesian children suffers from growth disorders due to insufficient nutrition (WHO, 2021). Poor nutrition in children has adverse effects on physical and cognitive development, ultimately impacting their academic performance and future productivity (Kesehatan, 2021)

In the matter of the Indonesian government has initiated and planned various nutritional improvement programs. One such initiative is the Social Development Nutritious Meals Program which aims to provide adequate nutritional intake for school children during learning activities. While this program has yet to be officially presented, strong indications suggest that it is in the planning stages and has the potential to be realized in the near future. The program is designed to ensure that children receive sufficient nutrition while at school, as part of broader efforts to improve their health, mind focus, and academic outcomes. It is envisioned to be implemented across Indonesia, including in Klaten Regency. The anticipated Free Nutritious Meals Program is expected to enhance children's nutritional status and foster better growth and development. However, the success of this program heavily depends on the preparedness availability of lower level implementers, such as school principals, teachers, and food service providers, who play a key role in implementing policies on the ground.

The preparedness availability of implementers significantly determines the effectiveness of public policy implementation. Regarded from Edwards (Edward III, 1980), the success of policy implementation as derived from several factors, including the availability of resources, effective communication among stakeholders, and the attitudes and motivation of implementers. At the local level, lower level implementers act as intermediaries between policymakers and the target community. In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency, implementer utility becomes a critical factor, as they are responsible for food distribution, quality supervision, and nutrition education for children.

However, various studies have revealed challenges faced by implementers of food programs in different regions. Research conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2019) found that implementers of food programs in certain areas of Indonesia often encounter obstacles such as a lack of technical training, limited resources, and minimal support from local governments. Additionally, hierarchical and inflexible bureaucratic structures frequently not fast the implementation process, hindering the achievement of program objectives (Rahmawati et al., 2019).

Similar challenges can be identified in Klaten Regency. Preliminary interviews with several program implementers indicate that many feel unde in terms of the knowledge and skills required to effectively execute such

programs. Furthermore, implementer motivation and commitment also play a role in program execution. According to Herzberg's motivation theory (1966), implementers with high job satisfaction levels are more likely to be motivated to work optimally and contribute positively to program success.

Another challenge faced by programs of this nature involves monitoring and evaluation. As Grindle (1980) asserted, effective oversight is a crucial element of successful public policy implementation. In practice, monitoring the quality of food provided and ensuring implementers adhere to standard procedures are often insufficiently systematic. Research by Suryani (2020) revealed that many schools in rural areas lack adequate resources, both in terms of manpower and equipment, to conduct effective oversight.

An equally significant factor influencing implementers' preparedness availability is local government support. As highlighted by Lipsky (1980) in the street-level bureaucracy theory, field-level implementers—such as school principals and those tasked with preparing meal menus—often have to make quick decisions and navigate complex situations without adequate support from their superiors. This is also evident in the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency, where implementers often find that technical guidelines provided by the central government do not necessarily align with local conditions, forcing them to improvise in the field (Hartanto&Triyanto, 2021).

Community involvement in supporting this program is another critical challenge. Community participation is often considered a key factor in the success of government programs, particularly in the fields of health and nutrition (Putri&Nurul, 2021). However, in some areas, community participation in food programs remains low, which impacts local support for implementers. This aligns with Arnstein's theory of community participation, which posits that the success of a program heavily depends on the level of community engagement, ranging from mere information dissemination to direct involvement in program implementation (Arnstein, 1969).

Moreover, geographical and infrastructural challenges in Klaten Regency also affect implementers' readiness. Some regions, particularly remote areas, face accessibility issues that make the distribution of food supplies more challenging and time-consuming (Firmansyah& Putra, 2022). These conditions add to the workload of field-level implementers, especially those responsible for distributing food supplies to hard-to-reach schools.

Given this context, it is essential to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the preparedness availability of lower level implementers to execute the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency. This evaluation must encompass technical, psychological, social, and structural factors that can influence implementers' capabilities in performing their duties. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to program improvements, particularly in strengthening implementer capacity and enhancing coordination among relevant stakeholders. Additionally, the results of this study can provide valuable input for local governments in formulating more effective policies that respond to field-level needs.

Based on the aforementioned background, the research question posed is: How prepared are lower level implementers to anticipate and prepare for the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency? This study aims to analyze implementer preparedness matter in anticipating and preparing for the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Program.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Policy Implementation Theory

Policy implementation is the process of transforming policies designed by policymakers into tangible actions experienced by the target community. As stated by Edward III (1980), policy implementation is not merely the execution of policy instructions but also involves adapting policies to local contexts, taking into account various factors that influence their effectiveness.

According to Grindle (1980), policy implementation is influenced by two main elements: the *content of policy* and the *context of implementation*. The content of the policy includes the objectives to be achieved, the clarity of the policy, and its feasibility in the field. Meanwhile, the context of implementation involves external factors that may affect the implementation process, such as resource availability, political support, bureaucracy, and community participation.

#### 2.1.1 Edward III's Implementation Model

One of the most widely used models in policy implementation studies is Edward III's model (1980). This model emphasizes that the success of policy implementation is influenced by four main variables:

##### a. Communication

Effective communication between policymakers and implementers in the field is essential in the implementation process. Edward asserts that policy clarity, a shared understanding of the policy, and smooth information flow among stakeholders significantly determine the extent to which the policy can be effectively implemented (Edward III, 1980). In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency, if communication between local implementers (e.g., schools) and the local government is hindered, the implementers' understanding of the policy's goals and procedures may become distorted, ultimately affecting the quality of implementation.

##### b. Resources

Resources encompass all forms of support required to execute the policy, such as funding, manpower, and infrastructure. Edward III emphasizes that without adequate resources, even the best-designed policies cannot be implemented effectively. In this research context, resources refer to sufficient funding, nutritious food supplies, transportation tools for food distribution, and trained personnel to monitor food quality in schools.

##### c. Disposition or Attitude of Implementers

The attitude of policy implementers toward the policy plays a significant role in the success of its implementation. If implementers support the policy, they are likely to implement it with strong commitment. However, if implementers are apathetic or reject the policy, its implementation will face

obstacles. For the Free Nutritious Meals Program, if implementers (e.g., school principals or teachers) do not believe in the importance of the program for students, they may not wholeheartedly perform their tasks.

**d. Bureaucratic Structure**

Complicated and inflexible bureaucratic structures can impede policy implementation. Edward III argues that the simpler and more flexible the bureaucratic structure, the easier it is to implement policies. Bureaucratic complexity often slows decision-making processes in the field. This is also relevant to the context of Klaten Regency, where unsupportive bureaucratic structures could delay the distribution of nutritious meals or the reporting of field issues.

**2.1.2 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Implementation Models**

Policy implementation models are often divided into two major approaches: the *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches. The top-down approach emphasizes that the policy implementation process must originate from the central level, where policies are formulated, and then conveyed to the local level for execution. Advocates of this approach, such as Sabatier and Mazmanian (1981), argue that the success of implementation depends largely on how clearly and specifically policies are formulated at the central level and how well they are monitored and controlled.

Conversely, the bottom-up approach emphasizes that policy implementers in the field must have the flexibility to adapt policies to local conditions. Lipsky (1980), in his book *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, highlights the role of field-level bureaucrats, such as teachers, health workers, and food providers, who have considerable autonomy in implementing policies according to the situations they face. In this context, policy implementation is not solely based on central instructions but also relies on the decisions and improvisations made by field implementers.

In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program, the bottom-up approach can be observed in how school principals and food service providers must make quick decisions related to meal procurement and distribution, particularly when resources are limited or field conditions change, such as logistical challenges.

**2.1.3 Grindle's Implementation Model**

Grindle (1980) introduces a political dimension in policy implementation. According to Grindle, policy implementation is not just a technical matter but is heavily influenced by politics and power. Two key factors in Grindle's model are:

**a. Content of Policy**

Factors within the policy content that influence implementation include:

- Policy objectives: Are the objectives clear and specific? Are they realistic and achievable?
- Target groups: To what extent can the target groups accept or reject the policy?

## **b. Context of Implementation**

Factors within the implementation context include:

- Political and economic conditions: Do these conditions support or hinder policy implementation?
- Bureaucratic support: Does the bureaucratic structure support the policy?
- Community participation: To what extent are communities involved and supportive of the policy?

In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency, the policy's content includes its primary objective of improving children's nutrition, while the implementation context encompasses conditions in Klaten Regency, such as local government budget constraints, inadequate infrastructure in some schools, and the participation of schools and communities in supporting the program.

### **2.1.4 Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory**

Lipsky's *Street-Level Bureaucracy* theory (1980) provides insights into the role of field implementers, such as teachers, food service providers, and health workers, in the policy implementation process. Lipsky posits that policy implementers have significant autonomy in interpreting and adjusting policies based on field conditions. This autonomy enables them to make decisions that directly impact the success of the policy.

However, the autonomy of implementers also presents its own challenges. Often, they face resource constraints, unrealistic targets, and high expectations from policymakers. In these situations, field implementers frequently have to compromise between policy idealism and field realities.

In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency, field implementers (such as school principals and food service providers) may encounter limitations in food supply, transportation, and technical support. They must adapt the program to local situations while striving to achieve policy objectives.

### **2.1.5 Mazmanian and Sabatier's Framework**

Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) introduced an analytical framework focusing on conditions that influence the success of policy implementation. They identified three groups of variables affecting implementation:

#### **a. Characteristics of the Problem**

This includes the complexity of the problem the policy seeks to address. The more complex the problem, the more challenging it is to implement the policy successfully.

#### **b. Policy Characteristics**

This includes how clearly the policy is formulated and whether specific and measurable objectives exist.

### **c. Implementation Environment**

The political, social, and economic environment in which the policy is implemented significantly affects its success. Policies implemented in a supportive environment are more likely to succeed.

In the context of the Free Nutritious Meals Program, the problem characteristics include issues of stunting and malnutrition, which are complex problems with multiple contributing factors. The policy characteristics and the local implementation environment must be carefully considered to ensure the program's success.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive case study approach to explore the preparedness matter of lower-level implementers in executing the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency. The research focuses on understanding the factors influencing implementers' Prepared Availability and the challenges they face. The case study method was chosen as it allows for an in-depth examination of the program within its real-world context, particularly in primary schools across both rural and urban areas of Klaten Regency.

Data was collected through multiple techniques, including in-depth interviews, observations, simulations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, and food service staff to capture their perspectives and experiences. Observations were carried out in schools to assess the actual implementation process, while simulations were used to evaluate implementers' performance in a controlled environment. Documentation, such as school reports and news articles, provided additional context and verification for the findings.

Data analysis followed an interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction focused on filtering and categorizing relevant information, while data display used narratives and visual tools to identify patterns and relationships. Conclusions were drawn and verified through triangulation, comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents to ensure consistency and validity. This approach ensured a comprehensive and credible analysis of implementers' prepared availability and the program's challenges.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Availability Preparedness of Lower level Implementers in Executing the Free Nutritious Meals Program**

The Availability preparedness of lower level implementers to execute the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency varies significantly and is influenced by several key factors such as local government support, implementer capacity, resource availability, and community participation. Although the central government has not yet issued formal instructions for the program's launch, some field implementers have independently initiated

preparatory steps, such as internal training, logistical planning, and cross-sectoral coordination.

Interviews with school principals, teachers, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) involved in food provision at several elementary schools in Klaten Regency provided in-depth insights into their Availability Preparedness to implement the program. Observations further revealed variations in Availability Preparedness among schools, influenced by their respective infrastructure conditions.

#### **4.1.1 Local Government Support**

One of the most determining factors in implementers' Availability Preparedness is the support provided by the local government. While there have been indications from the Klaten Regency government regarding the potential implementation of the program, support has been uneven across regions.

For instance, the principal of State Elementary 2 Kupang reported receiving information about the possibility of a nutritious meals program and has encouraged students to bring their own lunchboxes as part of a "shared lunchtime" habit. Meanwhile, principals from schools in remote areas, such as State Elementary Kebon in BayatSubdistrict, stated they have yet to receive clear instructions.

"Until now, there has been no clear direction, so we cannot make further preparations beyond utilizing existing resources," remarked the principal.

Support from the local government is crucial, particularly in terms of budget allocation and the provision of supporting infrastructure, such as adequate school kitchens. Some "model schools" have begun their preparations by utilizing budget allocations to improve school kitchens and purchase cooking equipment. For example, State Elementary 1 Munggung, located in Karangdowo Subdistrict, already provides lunch due to its extended school hours, making the transition to a free nutritious meals program less challenging.

In contrast, schools like State Elementary 1 Bakungan, which has only 38 students across all grades, face significant challenges due to limited resources. The school has not received infrastructural upgrades despite submitting proposals to the Klaten Regency Education Office. For this program, they may rely on community collaboration to procure meal provisions.

#### **4.1.2 Capacity of Implementers**

Implementer capacity is another key factor in readiness. Interviews with teachers and kitchen staff revealed that technical and managerial capacities vary widely, often depending on their prior experience with similar programs. Teachers at private elementary schools in Klaten generally reported higher levels of readiness, having previously participated in government health and nutrition programs, such as the Additional Food Program (*PemberianMakananTambahan*, PMT).



"We are well-versed in managing nutritious meals for children, as our school already provides lunch for students," noted a teacher from an integrated Islamic school (*Integrated Elementary School IT*).

Conversely, rural schools reported limited implementer capacity. For instance, kitchen staff at State Elementary 2 Jatinom admitted to lacking training in nutrition standards.

"We've never received specialized training on preparing nutritious meals. If the program is implemented, we'll need guidance to ensure we can prepare proper meals for the children," said one staff member.

Observation of a simulation exercise at State Elementary 2 Kupang revealed that while the school principal had formed a preparatory team involving teachers and a catering business, minor adjustments were needed to optimize execution, such as ensuring meal preparation aligns with school schedules to avoid disruptions.

#### **4.1.3 Resource Availability**

Resource availability—such as funding and infrastructure—emerged as one of the most significant barriers to readiness. Observations highlighted that schools in remote areas often lack adequate kitchen facilities and cooking equipment. In some cases, classrooms or outdoor spaces were used as makeshift kitchens.

For example, the principal of a school in Wedi Subdistrict stated, "We don't have a dedicated kitchen. For meal programs, we usually cook in empty rooms or outdoors, but that's far from ideal. We need better facilities."

Moreover, logistical challenges in distributing food supplies were a major concern, particularly in remote areas. A principal from State Elementary 3 Kemalang explained,

"Food distribution here heavily depends on weather conditions. During the rainy season, roads become muddy and nearly impassable, raising concerns about timely delivery of fresh ingredients."

Urban schools generally have better access to markets and fresh produce, while rural schools often rely on local gardens, which may not meet the program's nutritional needs.

#### **4.1.4 Community Participation**

Community participation, particularly from parents, plays a crucial role in implementers' readiness. In some schools, parents actively contribute to various program preparations. For instance, at State Elementary 2 Plangu, the school committee and parents collaborate to plant vegetables in school gardens to anticipate potential supply shortages once the program is launched.

"We've encouraged parents to grow vegetables in their backyards and at school. This will reduce our reliance on external food sources," explained a teacher involved in the program.

However, schools in other areas reported low levels of community participation. The principal of a school in TulungSubdistrict cited a lack of program socialization as a major factor.

“Parents here don’t fully understand the program, so their interest is limited. More outreach is needed to raise awareness,” the principal noted.

Economic constraints also hinder participation, as parents from lower-income families tend to prioritize daily livelihoods over school involvement.

#### **4.1.5 Independent Preparations**

Despite the absence of formal program directives, some schools have proactively prepared for the program. For example, State Elementary 8 Klaten has initiated internal training for teachers and kitchen staff on preparing nutritious meals, collaborating with the local health center (*puskesmas*) for guidance.

“We need stronger collaboration with health agencies to monitor children’s nutrition once the program starts,” remarked a staff member.

#### **4.2 Factors Influencing Implementers’ Readiness**

Several factors were identified as key determinants of lower level implementers' readiness:

- Local government support: Uneven support affects school readiness, particularly in terms of funding and infrastructure.
- Human resources: Schools with trained and experienced staff are more prepared than those lacking such resources.
- Infrastructure and facilities: Adequate kitchen facilities enhance readiness, whereas limited infrastructure poses significant barriers.
- Community participation: Active involvement of parents and local communities supports program implementation.

#### **4.3 Barriers to Program Implementation**

The study identified several barriers that may hinder the program's execution:

- Funding limitations: Budget constraints may not fully cover program needs. A reduction in per-meal allocations from IDR 15,000 to IDR 7,500 raises concerns about maintaining quality.
- Logistics and distribution: Delays in food supply deliveries, particularly in remote areas, may disrupt the program.
- Lack of training: Implementers require technical training on nutrition standards and meal preparation.
- Coordination issues: Collaboration between schools, health agencies, and other stakeholders needs improvement.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight that the preparedness in Availability of lower level implementers for the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency is influenced by various factors, including local government support, implementer capacity, resource availability, and community participation. While the program shows potential to address nutrition issues among primary school children, its success heavily depends on overcoming existing challenges.

To better understand these findings, they can be linked to several theoretical frameworks on policy implementation discussed in the literature review.

#### **4.4.1 Local Government Support and Policy Implementation Theory**

Local government support, in terms of budget allocation and infrastructural improvements, plays a critical role in lower level implementers' readiness. According to Edward III's (1980) theory, resource availability is a fundamental factor in successful policy implementation. While the Klaten Regency government has signaled support for the program, gaps in resource distribution remain, particularly in remote areas. Delays in food distribution and insufficient funding allocations pose significant challenges.

This aligns with Grindle's (1980) model, which emphasizes the importance of the implementation context, including political and resource conditions. Schools with better access to resources, such as private institutions or urban schools, demonstrated higher preparedness availability levels compared to rural schools with limited support. The discrepancies observed in resource availability also reflect Lipsky's (1980) *Street-Level Bureaucracy* theory, where field-level implementers must adapt and make decisions within constrained environments, leading to inconsistent program quality across schools.

#### **4.4.2 Implementer Capacity and Preparedness in availability for Implementation**

The capacity of implementers comprising technical skills, managerial abilities, and motivation-emerged as a pivotal determinant of program readiness. Edward III's (1980) framework highlights that implementers' disposition, attitudes, and understanding significantly influence policy outcomes. This study revealed that schools with prior experience in similar programs or staff trained in nutrition management were better prepared for Availability.

However, a lack of technical training among many implementers underscores the need for targeted capacity-building efforts. This is consistent with Lipsky's (1980) bottom-up implementation model, which recognizes the autonomy of lower level implementers in interpreting and adapting policies based on local realities. Without adequate training, implementers are likely to rely on improvised solutions, potentially compromising program effectiveness. Capacity-building aligns with the *capacity development* approach in policy implementation, emphasizing continuous education and training for implementers. Addressing gaps in technical knowledge and fostering greater motivation among staff will be essential to improving program readiness.

#### **4.4.3 Resource Availability and Infrastructure as Barriers**

Edward III (1980) underscores the critical role of resources—financial, infrastructural, and human—in policy implementation. This study found that inadequate kitchens, cooking equipment, and transportation facilities significantly hinder program readiness, particularly in rural areas. Some

schools reported having to use classrooms as temporary kitchens or relying on local gardens for food supplies, which are insufficient to meet nutritional requirements.

The environmental constraints observed in this study support Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983) framework, which identifies implementation environments including infrastructure and access to resources as key determinants of policy success. Without significant investments in school infrastructure and logistical systems, achieving program goals will remain challenging.

#### **4.4.4 Community Participation and Collaborative Efforts**

Community participation emerged as a vital factor influencing program readiness. Schools that actively engaged parents and local communities in preparation efforts demonstrated higher preparedness availability levels. This aligns with Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, which emphasizes the importance of direct community involvement in program success.

For instance, schools where parents contributed fresh produce or participated in program discussions were better positioned to address resource constraints. Strengthening community involvement will require targeted socialization efforts to increase awareness and foster collaboration between schools and local stakeholders.

#### **4.4.5 Barriers to Program Implementation**

Several barriers identified in this study—funding limitations, logistical challenges, lack of training, and inadequate coordination—highlight the gaps between policy design and implementation. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) note that poorly defined operational guidelines and insufficient training often undermine policy outcomes. In this case, the absence of clear technical directives and comprehensive training programs for implementers may lead to inconsistent program delivery across schools.

Additionally, coordination among various stakeholders, including schools, local governments, and health agencies, requires improvement. Weak coordination can result in delays in food distribution and insufficient oversight of program implementation.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATION**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study concludes that the preparedness in availability of lower level implementers to execute the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency requires improvement across several dimensions. While the program has potential for implementation, its success may not be fully optimized due to internal and external factors affecting implementers' preparedness availability. The main conclusions derived from this research are as follows:

#### **1. Internal Factors:**

Implementer capacity, technical competence, and motivation significantly influence their readiness. Implementers with prior training or experience in

similar programs demonstrated better preparedness availability. However, a large proportion of implementers lack adequate training or experience, affecting the quality of program implementation.

**2. External Factors:**

Support from the government, community involvement, and resource availability play crucial roles in determining implementers' readiness. Uneven support distribution, logistical challenges, and insufficient infrastructure remain key challenges that need to be addressed.

**3. Key Barriers:**

The main obstacles to program implementation include resource constraints (e.g., funding and infrastructure), limited technical training for implementers, and logistical issues in food distribution, particularly in rural areas. Schools must leverage community resources, such as partnerships with local catering businesses, to optimize program execution.

Overall, while the program shows great potential to improve the nutritional status of primary school children in Klaten Regency, its success depends on improving implementer preparedness availability and ensuring stronger support from the government and community.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

To address the identified challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meals Program, the following recommendations are proposed:

**1. Increase Socialization, Training, and Technical Guidance**

The government should implement regular training sessions and technical guidance for implementers, covering topics such as nutritional meal management, kitchen operations, and program monitoring and evaluation. Training efforts should also include collaboration with health agencies to provide expert support and ensure implementers are equipped with the necessary skills.

**2. Enhance Resource Allocation**

Adequate funding must be allocated to address the needs of the program, including infrastructure upgrades (e.g., school kitchens and cooking equipment) and operational costs.

Ensure equitable distribution of resources, particularly to schools in rural and underdeveloped areas, to reduce disparities in program readiness.

**3. Develop a Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

Regular evaluations should be conducted to assess the program's implementation and outcomes, involving all relevant stakeholders such as schools, health agencies, and local governments.

Feedback mechanisms should be established to identify challenges early and implement corrective measures promptly.

**4. Strengthen Coordination Among Stakeholders**

Effective coordination should be established among schools, local governments, and related agencies (e.g., health and education offices) to ensure alignment and efficiency in program execution.

Collaboration frameworks should include joint planning, clear communication channels, and shared accountability for program outcomes.

#### **5. Promote Community Participation**

Increase community engagement by conducting awareness campaigns and fostering partnerships with parents, local businesses, and community groups.

Encourage community contributions, such as providing fresh produce or volunteering for program activities, to enhance program sustainability and local ownership.

By implementing these recommendations, the Free Nutritious Meals Program in Klaten Regency can achieve its objectives of improving children's nutritional status and fostering better growth, health, and academic outcomes. These measures will also help create a more sustainable, equitable, and effective program for future implementation.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

In light of the findings from this study, the following recommendations are put forth for further research:

#### **1. Further Research on the Impact of the Program**

Subsequent studies could concentrate on assessing the impact of the free lunch program on students' health and academic performance. Longitudinal studies that evaluate changes in students' nutritional status and learning performance before and after the program's implementation would be highly advantageous.

#### **2. Comparative Studies in Other Regions**

Comparative studies in other regions could also be conducted to provide a more comprehensive picture of the factors that influence program success in various local contexts.

#### **3. A further study could be conducted on the effectiveness of cooperation with local communities.**

Research on the effectiveness of cooperation between schools and local communities in the procurement and provision of nutritious meals can provide further insight into the most efficient implementation model.

#### **4. Research on School Infrastructure Readiness**

Further research is needed to assess the preparedness availability of school infrastructure, such as kitchens, food storage, and student dining facilities, to support the successful implementation of this program.

It is anticipated that the aforementioned conclusions and recommendations will facilitate the more effective implementation of the free lunch program for students in Klaten District, thereby ensuring optimal benefits for the health and education of Students.

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