



IMPLEMENTATION QUALITATIVE EVALUATION LOGISTICS COMPLIANCE AND ACCEPTABILITY

Khusnul Chotimah¹, Rohmat Ilzar Rozaqi², Ahmad Paisal Ariski³, M Rizki
Arya Effendi⁴, M Rifky Ananda⁵, Aminullah⁶

¹Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

²Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

³Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

⁴Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

⁵Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

⁶Departement of Public Administration, Universitas Yudharta Pasuruan, Indonesia

Email: khusnulchotimah227@gmail.com¹, ilzarrozaqi24@gmail.com², paisalahmad913@gmail.com³, aryaeffendi06@gmail.com⁴, rifkysaputra1307@gmail.com⁵, aminullah@yudharta.ac.id⁶

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Abstract:

The Free Nutritious Meals Programme (MBG) is a central government structural intervention to improve human resource quality ahead of the 2045 Golden Generation. Despite its scale, implementation faces operational obstacles and perception gaps at the grassroots. This study critically evaluates logistics management, regulatory compliance, and sociological barriers to MBG implementation in primary and secondary schools in Pasuruan Regency/City. Using a descriptive-evaluative qualitative method with a case study approach, data were gathered via in-depth interviews with teaching staff, direct observation of classroom distribution, and analysis of daily regulatory documents during March–April 2026. Findings revealed three main issues: (1) reduced nutritional quality caused by milk distribution cut to twice weekly, violating National Nutrition Agency Regulation No. 5 of 2026; (2) weak emergency logistics management, with rations for absent pupils ad hoc reallocated as double portions in class; and (3) low consumption due to rigid menu formulation, prompting refusals from students with allergies, boredom from monotonous menus, and vegetable aversion. Sociologically, some teaching staff expressed ideological resistance, preferring measures addressing structural poverty and education costs. Recommendations include revising local regulations to add technical guidelines for surplus management, creating a pupil allergy database, and aligning supporting local government budgets.

Keywords: Free Nutritious Meals, Policy Implementation, Logistics Management, Food Allergies, Structural Poverty.

INTRODUCTION

School-based nutrition programmes (School Feeding Programmes) have long been recognised globally as an effective tool for intervening in the cycle of poverty, improving health status, and optimising the cognitive performance of pupils in developing countries. In Indonesia itself, an evaluation of the national school nutrition programme has shown that school-based interventions have been proven to improve nutritional knowledge, pupil attendance, and hygiene behaviour (Prameshti et al., 2025). This policy aims to ensure pupils meet the daily Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) as an absolute prerequisite for fostering a competitive generation in preparation for Indonesia's Golden Age in 2045.

However, in public administration studies, the transition of policy from the



macro-formulation phase at the central level to the micro-implementation phase at the local level often triggers the phenomenon of 'policy slippage' – a condition in which the policy's original objectives are distorted or diminished due to operational complexities on the ground. The regency and city of Pasuruan, in East Java Province, emerged as one of the buffer regions exhibiting these contradictory dynamics during the first half of 2026. In the context of Indonesian public administration, Edwards' three variables – communication, resources, disposition and bureaucratic structure – have been empirically proven to determine the success or failure of government programmes at the grassroots level (Addawiyah et al., 2025).

On the one hand, local bureaucracies are required to rapidly absorb large amounts of the logistics budget. On the other hand, implementation in the classroom is confronted with the reality of declining food nutritional quality, the unpreparedness of teachers as the day-to-day implementers, and even biological resistance from the pupils themselves, such as menu fatigue and the risk of allergies.

This study focuses on three dimensions of evaluation:

1. Compliance: Assessing the alignment of food distribution in Pasuruan with the latest regulations (Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 and BGN Regulation No. 5 of 2026).
2. Student Acceptability Dimension: Analysing barriers to nutrient intake resulting from students' psychological preferences and medical risks.
3. Sociological Disposition Dimension: Exploring the discursive resistance of teachers who perceive a conflict of priorities between meeting nutritional needs and the exemption from fees for free education.

Through an in-depth qualitative approach, this article is expected to contribute a blueprint for technical improvements for policy-makers at both the regional and national levels.

Literature Review

A. George C. Edwards III's Theory of Public Policy Implementation

This policy targets the fulfilment of students' daily Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDAs) as an absolute prerequisite for fostering a competitive generation in preparation for Indonesia Emas 2045 (Addawiyah Addawiyah et al., 2025). To analyse the structure of the problems surrounding the implementation of the MBG in Pasuruan, this study draws upon the policy implementation model formulated by George C. Edwards III in 1980. Edwards III articulated that the success or failure of a public programme's execution is determined simultaneously by four main variables:

1. Communication: The clarity and consistency of the transmission of regulatory information from policymakers to frontline bureaucrats.
2. Resources: The availability of supporting components, including financial resources, human expertise and the resilience of the logistics supply chain infrastructure.
3. Disposition: The behavioural tendencies, commitment and attitudes (acceptance or rejection) of implementers towards the urgency of the

programme.

4. Bureaucratic Structure: The existence of clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide the accountable distribution of logistics.

B. The Concept of the Right to Nutrition Versus Structural Accessibility to Education

Theoretically, school feeding programmes have a positive causal relationship with a reduction in pupil absenteeism. However, the sociology of education views nutritional provision as merely one of several supporting variables. Nutritional interventions are assessed as losing their leverage significantly if basic prerequisites in the form of structural accessibility to education such as the waiver of uniform fees, the provision of textbooks, and the availability of free public transport have not been addressed by local authorities. A systematic review of education costs in Indonesia shows that although primary education is declared to be free, the burden of additional costs such as uniforms, books and transport remains a selection mechanism that exacerbates inequalities in access and increases the risk of school dropout among poor families (Rajagukguk, 2025). The inability to reduce these ancillary costs remains a key determining factor behind the high dropout rates among families with low economic status.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-evaluative method. A qualitative approach was chosen as it is capable of capturing the essence of the phenomenon in a naturalistic manner and exploring the meaning behind the verbal and non-verbal actions of the research subjects without resorting to laboratory manipulation.

Time and Location: Field research was conducted between March and April 2026, taking place at several primary schools (SD) and nursery schools (TK) that formed the sampling clusters for the implementation of the MBG programme in Pasuruan and Mojokerto Regencies, East Java.

Informants (Sample): Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the representativeness of the operational data. Informants comprised headteachers, teaching staff (class teachers), parent representatives, and pupils benefiting from the programme.

Data Collection Techniques: Primary data was collected through two main instruments:

1. Loosely structured in-depth interviews to explore teachers' attitudes and the empirical experiences of parents and pupils.

2. Direct observation, conducted passively and participatively during break times to monitor the loading and unloading of canteen logistics, pupils' eating behaviour, and food waste. Secondary data was obtained through a documentary review of Presidential Regulations and BGN Regulations issued between 2024 and 2026.

Data Analysis Techniques: Data were analysed interactively, adopting the model proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), which encompasses the phases of reducing raw field data, presenting the data in a legal matrix, and

drawing conclusions and conducting theoretical verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Findings (Field Findings)

The field investigation and qualitative data reconstruction process carried out by the researchers at a number of primary schools (SD) and lower secondary schools (SMP) in Pasuruan Regency and City revealed complex operational dynamics. Phenomena observed in the field indicate that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Programme (MBG) does not proceed in a linear fashion as outlined in the plan on paper. The researchers have distilled these findings into the following six expanded clusters of objective facts:

1. Reduction in Key Nutritional Components (Case of Cuts to Daily Milk Rations)

According to the draft macro-planning document and initial briefing received by the school committee, every pupil should receive one complete healthy meal package along with one carton of liquid milk on each school day. However, the reality on the ground reveals a massive decline in quality. Across all the educational institutions included in the research sample in Pasuruan, milk distribution has been drastically cut back to just twice a week (generally distributed on Tuesdays and Thursdays). International standards for effective school feeding programmes require the consistent daily distribution of milk and animal protein on every school day as a key component in meeting children's daily calcium and micronutrient requirements (Suprpto et al., 2025). Deviations from these standards have the potential to undermine the overall impact of the programme, as identified in the national MBG policy review (United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), 2020).

When questioned, school logistics managers and representatives of the local Nutrition Fulfilment Service Unit (SPPG) argued that this measure had been taken out of necessity due to constraints arising from limited budgets for daily operational distribution, as well as fluctuations in the supply chain from local dairy farmers who were unable to consistently meet the daily procurement quota. This cut automatically reduces the children's daily intake of calcium and micronutrients from the original target.

2. Restrictions on Operational Working Days for Logistics Distribution

The delivery schedule for food supplies by communal kitchens/vendors is strictly tied to a 5-day working week, running from Monday to Friday only. In educational institutions that operate a Full Day School system, this restriction does not disrupt the timetable. However, for a number of outlying schools or madrasahs in Pasuruan Regency that still follow a conventional 6-day academic calendar (Monday to Saturday), this restriction leaves a gap.

On Saturdays, pupils are still required to attend and participate fully in teaching and learning activities, but they do not receive food supplies from the MBG programme. Consequently, there is an inconsistency in nutritional support, whereby pupils' nutritional needs are once again left entirely to the economic means and parenting practices of their respective parents at the weekend.

3. Complete Suspension of Distribution During Holiday Periods

All operational activities related to nutritional provision are completely halted (terminated) without exception when the academic calendar enters periods of national holidays, religious holidays, or end-of-term holidays. The implementation of the MBG programme in Pasuruan is rigidly confined to being an institution-based intervention (school-based intervention), rather than serving as a household social safety net.

Consequently, during the weeks of the school holidays, children from poor families or vulnerable groups in Pasuruan lose access to the nationally standardised nutritious meals they would normally receive in the classroom. From a nutritional sustainability perspective, this prolonged hiatus risks triggering a periodic decline in children's nutritional status.

4. Mismanagement of Logistical Surpluses (The 'Double Portion' Phenomenon)

One of the most critical findings in the classroom was a clear breach of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for logistics due to the absence of an emergency management mechanism. Every day, there are fluctuations in pupil attendance figures, with some children absent from school due to illness, authorised leave, or without explanation. Meal portions for these absent children are still delivered to the school in sealed packaging because the delivery database relies on manually entered figures for the number of active pupils.

Due to the absence of technical guidelines regarding the mechanism for returning leftover food to the central kitchen, class teachers resort to ad-hoc workarounds. The surplus food is spontaneously redistributed to pupils who are present. Researchers repeatedly observed that certain pupils received double portions; in some extreme cases, a single child was forced or voluntarily consumed three portions of food at once during a single break. This malpractice of haphazard logistical diversion not only undermines the principle of accountability in the distribution of state funds, but also poses a clinical risk of triggering an unhealthy calorie surplus, which paves the way for childhood obesity in the region.

5. Interruption of Nutrient Absorption Due to Pupils' Refusal (Food Waste)

Although meals are successfully distributed to classroom tables, the rate of biological absorption of nutrients into pupils' bodies is hampered by high rates of food refusal. Researchers found extremely high volumes of food waste in school bins, where side dishes and rice are often discarded intact or only half-eaten. (A monotonous menu without allergy mitigation measures has been shown to significantly reduce the absorption of nutrients that are the primary targets of the programme. Based on in-depth interviews with pupils and cleaning staff, this widespread refusal is triggered by three main factors:

Medical Comorbidities (Hidden Allergies): Many children are forced to go on hunger strikes or are forbidden by their parents from touching the MBG menu because they have a history of clinical allergies to certain food ingredients (such as severe itching and shortness of breath caused by egg protein, sea fish, or nuts). It has been found that neither the school nor the caterers maintain a database of children's allergy records, meaning that the meals supplied potentially pose a physical risk to pupils with allergies.

Psychological Boredom (Monotonous Menu): The menu formula provided by the caterers tends to be repetitive and rigid, lacking innovation in flavour. The rotation of side dishes, which consists of the same combinations week after week, triggers psychological boredom in children, causing their appetite to drop drastically.

Personal Preferences (Picky Eaters): The majority of primary school-aged children in Pasuruan show strong resistance to green vegetables (such as pak choi, green beans or boiled carrots) as well as certain side dishes prepared in a bland manner. Because the way the vegetables are prepared is unappealing to children's tastes, the fibre and vitamins in these lunchboxes almost always end up in the bin.

6. Discursive and Ideological Resistance from Teaching Staff

An equally important sociological finding is the emergence of horizontal friction and deep-seated scepticism amongst teachers and headteachers regarding the urgency of this policy. Educators on the ground feel burdened by the additional task of acting as 'food logistics supervisors', which takes time away from their teaching duties, without being provided with clear incentives or protective regulations.

Furthermore, teachers have levelled sharp ideological criticism. They view the massive allocation of funds from the central government's state budget for this freemeals programme as a form of public budget waste that fails to address the root causes of poverty in the region. In an in-depth interview, a senior classroom teacher representative in Pasuruan expressed his outright rejection:

> "We on the ground feel that this freemeals programme is like being forced to follow a compass. To be honest, rather than the state wasting billions of rupiah every day on providing food that, in the end, many children simply throw away in the bin, it would be far more urgent to use that budget to completely waive structural education fees for poor families. The children in Pasuruan are at risk of dropping out of school not because they cannot have breakfast at home, sir. They drop out because their parents cannot afford to buy school uniforms, purchase textbooks that change every year, or pay for daily transport to school. Our priority in this region is protecting them from the cost of schooling, not merely addressing their basic nutritional needs, which their families can actually manage themselves."

The above quote reflects a significant mismatch in perceptions between policy planners in Jakarta and frontline implementers in Pasuruan, which ultimately undermines teachers' commitment to ensuring the success of the MBG programme at the grassroots level. This ideological resistance from educators is in line with academic criticism that questions the priorities of the MBG programme from a social justice perspective, whereby meeting nutritional needs is deemed not to have addressed the more pressing structural roots of educational poverty, such as the costs of school uniforms, transport and textbooks (Rajagukguk, 2025).

To examine the validity of operational governance in Pasuruan, the six field findings were analysed using the highest-ranking instrument of positive law

governing the implementation of this national policy:

Table: 1 Matrix for Analysing Legal Compliance with the Distribution of MBG in Pasuruan

Field Findings	Legal Status	Legal Framework Violation/ Compliance	Analysis of Policy Risks and Impacts
Milk Provided Twice a Week	Quality Non-compliance (Deviation)	Article 3(2) & Article 5(3) of BGN Regulation No. 5 of 2026 (AKG Nutritional Standards)	A Drastic Reduction in the Frequency of Milk Distribution Undermines the Calculation of Pupils' Daily Micronutrient (Calcium) Intake. This Indicates a Failure in Supply Chain Management by the Local Nutrition Provision Service Unit (SPPG), Which is Vulnerable to Administrative Penalties
Operational Monday-Friday	Conditional Compliance	Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 on the Governance of the MBG	For schools operating on a Full Day School system (5 working days), this regulation is appropriate. However, it constitutes a violation of rights if applied to schools that still use a 6-day working week calendar (Monday-Saturday)
Holidays on public holidays	In accordance with regulations	Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 (Institutional Assistance Category).	Legally valid under state administration. MBG is designated as a school-based attendance incentive, not a household social safety net instrument.
Pupil absence = Double allocation in class	Breach of Logistics SOP	Principle of Financial Accountability under Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 & Principle of Targeted Distribution under Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2024 (Article 5).	The ad-hoc distribution of double portions in the classroom undermines the reporting of state financial audits. The clinical impact leads to an unhealthy calorie surplus (childhood obesity) and obscures data on the actual national

			intake of nutrients.
Pupils on hunger strike (allergies, boredom, aversion to vegetables)	Breach of Food Safety & Dietary Variety Principles	Article 5(2) of BGN Regulation No. 5 of 2026 (Clause on Medical Safety and Menu Diversification).	A 'one-size-fits-all' approach to menus without allergy mitigation endangers the lives of children with medical conditions. Monotonous menus have a direct implication on high levels of food waste, resulting in budget funds being wasted rather than being utilised by the target population.

An in-depth review based on Edwards III Theory reveals that the implementation pathology of the MBG programme in Pasuruan stems from a negative interaction between two variables: Resources (Logistics & Technical Guidelines) and Disposition (Teachers' Mental Attitude).

Firstly, the failure of the local SPPG to provide daily milk indicates the fragility of the regional supply chain's resilience. Furthermore, the phenomenon of double portion distribution and the inability to accommodate children with allergies demonstrates that the bureaucratic structure has failed to provide emergency technical guidelines (Juknis) (Makambombu, 2026). Schools are left to operate without written guidance on managing food surpluses and diversifying alternative menus.

Secondly, the issue of disposition is evident in the ideological resistance of teachers. Teachers reject the programme not because of any antipathy towards ensuring children's nutritional needs are met, but because they witness first-hand the distortion of priorities on the ground. When teachers see their pupils at risk of dropping out of school due to structural costs (uniforms, transport, supplementary books) that local authorities have failed to address through the Regional Budget (APBD), the massive funding from the central government's State Budget (APBN) for daily meals is viewed as a measure that fails to tackle the root causes of structural poverty. This clash of perceptions leads teachers to carry out their programme monitoring duties in a minimalist and apathetic manner.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals Programme (MBG) in Pasuruan Regency/City has suffered from systemic quality degradation and governance distortions at the grassroots level. The programme has proven unable to fully implement central government regulations due to the removal of the daily milk component and weak accountability in managing surplus logistics (cases of double portions).

Furthermore, the rigid menu formulation, which disregards pupils' medical variables (allergy history) and psychological preferences (boredom and refusal to eat vegetables), has contributed to an increase in the volume of food waste in schools. These operational obstacles are exacerbated by a lack of commitment and the emergence of ideological resistance from teaching staff who view the MBG programme as blind to the priority of addressing the structural poverty caused by the cost of education in the region.

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