

## Knowledge of Rural School Children about Mid Day Meal Programme

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### ABSTRACT

*The Mid Day Meal Programme is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India launched on 15<sup>th</sup> august, 1995. Knowledge level of rural school children, parents, teachers and community leaders will reveal success of the mid day meal programme. Therefore, an effort was made to study the knowledge of rural school children about mid day meal programme. The study was conducted in the purposively selected two villages of Garag and Yettingudda of Dharwad district of northern Karnataka and two villages of Bhojla and Simarddha of Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh. From each village 30 rural school children, 30 parents, 20 community leaders and approximately 10 teachers were randomly selected for the study. Purposively 120 rural school children of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> standard belonged to 10-13 years of age group were selected. Structured interview schedule was used for collection of information. The data was analysed using suitable statistical parameters like frequencies, percentages, knowledge index and class intervals. The present study revealed that most of (96.70%) rural school children had high knowledge level with overall knowledge index of 88.28 percent. Most of (80.80%) parents had high knowledge level and overall knowledge index was 73.53 percent. In case of teachers cent percent teachers had high knowledge level with knowledge index of 95.65 percent. Community leaders had high knowledge level i.e. 92.50 percent and overall knowledge index was 83.33 percent. Thus, it can be concluded that rural school children, parents, teachers, community leaders had higher level of knowledge which showed that Government of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh were successful in creating awareness about the mid day meal programme at small level to a great extent. Some aspects such as drinking water facility, toilet facility, infrastructure facilities can be improved and public private partnership can also introduced in rural schools of Uttar Pradesh villages.*

**Key words:** Knowledge, Mid day meal, Rural school children, Nutrition, Hygiene

### INTRODUCTION

The Mid Day Meal Programme is a multi-faceted programme of the Government of India that, among other things, seeks to address issues of food security, lack of nutrition and access to education on a pan nation scale. It involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in Primary

and Upper Primary Classes in Government, Government Aided, Local Body, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate Innovative Education (AIE) Centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Schools run by Ministry of Labour.

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The primary objective of the programme is to provide hot cooked meal to children of primary and upper primary classes. With other objectives of improving nutritional status of children, encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities, thereby increasing the enrolment, retention and attendance rates. According to the government, it is the world's largest school feeding programme, reaching out to about 120,000,000 children in over 1,265,000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centres across the country. In 1953, Uttar Pradesh Government introduced a scheme, on voluntary basis, to provide meals consisting of boiled or roasted or sprouted grams, ground-nut, puffed rice, boiled potatoes or seasonal fruits. During 1962-63, Tamil Nadu became the first state in India to initiate a noon meal programme to children with the launch of Mid Day Meal Programme in primary schools. English and English (1958) defined knowledge as a body of information possessed by an individual which is in accordance with established fact. Therefore, an effort was made to study the knowledge of rural school children, parents, teachers and community leaders about the mid day meal programme.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the year 2015-16. The comparative study was conducted in the purposively selected two villages of Garag and Yettingudda of Dharwad district of northern Karnataka and two villages of Bhojla and Simarddha of Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh. From each village 30 rural school children, 30 parents, 20 community leaders (School Management Committee Members) and approximately 10 teachers were randomly selected for the study. Purposive sampling method was used to select 120 rural school children of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> standard

belonged to 10-13 years of age group to study their knowledge score and knowledge level about mid day meal programme. The dependent variable taken for the study was knowledge about mid day meal programme. Structured interview schedule was used for collection of information. The data were coded, categorized, tabulated, analysed and interpreted using suitable statistical parameters like frequencies, percentages, class intervals.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicated the knowledge of rural school children about mid day meal programme. In Dharwad region, knowledge of rural school children was cent percent with respect to after eating the food helper cleans the eating premises in the school, mid day meal is served in the afternoon, mid day meal is served everyday in the school and mid day meal programme is a school feeding programme. Rural school children had higher knowledge i.e. 98.30 per cent each with respect to the helper distributes the food to children in the school and mid day meal is provided with proper hygiene. Rural school children had very less knowledge i.e. 30.00 per cent about that mid day meal is prepared by the cook. The possible reasons could be that the helpers were appointed in the school for serving, distributing the meal and cleaning the eating premises after meals to maintain the proper hygiene and sanitation. Helpers performing their responsibilities related to mid day meal programme. Mid day meal is served everyday in the afternoon (12:00 noon) in which children were participating daily and also the timing and menu were displayed or painted on the wall of the school. As the central Government has made provision to display or paint the logo of the mid day meal programme, menu of the programme, list of community leaders/ school development management committee members on the walls of the school. This could be the probable

reason for cent percent knowledge of rural school children about that the mid day meal programme is a school feeding programme. As during lunch hours, school children were guided/ instructed to stand in a queue along with their plates for receiving meal which is distributed by the helpers. While distributing helpers used long handled ladle which was observed by the children. These might be the possible reasons for childrens' higher knowledge about distribution of mid day meal by the helpers with proper hygiene. Whereas, children had only 30 percent knowledge about that mid day meal is prepared by the cook. It could be due to the reason that in selected schools of Dharwad region, meal is not prepared within the school premises because cooked food directly comes from ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) at Hubli-Dharwad road which is providing hot cooked meal to schools with the collaboration of the AKSHAYA PATRA foundation. So, the school children have not observed that who is preparing meal as it comes from outside, they don't have enough knowledge about the preparation of the mid day meal. In Jhansi region, knowledge of rural school children was cent percent with respect to the mid day meal is served in the afternoon, mid day meal is served everyday in the school, mid day meal is provided with proper hygiene, mid day meal programme is a school feeding programme and mid day meal is prepared by the cook. Rural school children had higher knowledge i.e. 98.30 per cent regarding the mid day meal programme involves the members of school development management committee at school level and mid day meal programme is given for improving attendance in the school. The probable reasons might be that the time of serving meal is fixed i.e. 12.00 noon and it is compulsory to serve the mid day meal every day. Proper hygiene practices were adopted by the helpers and cooks during preparing and serving the meal such as using

long handled ladle/spoon for serving, cleanliness of the surrounding while preparing and serving the meal, washing hands before and after serving meal to children. Compulsion of displaying/painting logo of the programme, menu details , list of the community leaders involved in programme and the meal is provided during school hours only and the meal for the children is prepared within the school premises, cook comes to school to cook the mid day meal. The overall knowledge index of school children was high that is 88.28 percent.

In both the regions, rural school children had cent percent knowledge about the mid day meal is served in the afternoon, mid day meal is served everyday in the school and mid day meal programme is a school feeding programme. The overall knowledge index was 88.28% i.e. their knowledge is to the extent of 88.28 per cent.

Table 1a and Fig. 1 projected the knowledge level of rural school children about mid day meal programme. The highest percentage of rural school children i.e. 96.70 percent were belonged to high category, followed by only 3.30 per cent of the rural school children in the medium category and none of the children belonged to low category. This might be due to the reason that Government of India has put so much effort to implement this programme throughout the country by making provision of displaying/painting of logo of mid day meal programme, menu given under the programme, list of community leaders/ school development committee members on the walls of the school. As this programme provides meal during day time daily when the children are away from their home. It directly involves the school children so, all these probable reasons contributed for the higher knowledge of school children about the mid day meal programme.

**Table 1: Knowledge of school children about mid day meal programme****(n=120)**

Statement	Dharwad (n=60)		Jhansi (n=60)		Knowledge index
	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	
1.MDMP was started in 15 august 1995	60	100.00	49	81.70	90.83
2.The MDMP is given in the school to reduce the hunger	47	78.30	52	86.70	82.50
3.The MDMP improves the health status	48	80.00	48	80.00	80.00
4.After eating the food helper cleans the eating premises in the school	60	100.00	56	93.30	96.67
5.The MDMP is given for improving attendance	58	96.70	59	98.30	97.50
6.Helper distributes the food to children	59	98.30	53	83.30	93.33
7.MDMP involves the members of school development management committee at school level	47	78.30	59	98.30	88.33
8.MDM is provided to develop the good eating habits	49	81.70	46	76.70	79.17
9.Mid day meal is served in the afternoon	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
10. Food is important as it provides nutrients and act as a fuel for the body	49	81.70	44	73.30	77.50
11.Mid day meal is served everyday in the school	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
12.MDM is provided with proper hygiene	59	98.30	60	100.00	99.17
13. MDMP is a school feeding programme	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
14. Mid day meal is prepared by the cook	18	30.00	60	100.00	65.00
15. The quantity of MDM given is 100 g per child	43	71.70	46	76.70	74.17
<b>Overall knowledge index</b>					<b>88.28</b>

**Table 1a. Knowledge level of school children about mid day meal programme**  
**(n=120)**

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low (<5)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (6-10)	04	3.30
3.	High (>10)	116	96.70

Table 2 indicated the knowledge of parents about mid day meal programme. In both the regions, parents had cent percent knowledge about that their children attend the classes daily except holiday, the mid day meal has been served everyday in the school and cooked food is distributed to their children in the school. Particularly, in Dharwad region parents had maximum (96.70%) knowledge about that they send their children to school daily to get education. Parents had less knowledge (10.00%) about total cost of per meal provided by the government are Rs. 3.11 for primary children and Rs. 4.65 for upper primary children.

In Jhansi region, Parents had maximum (98.30%) knowledge about that their children consuming the mid day meal daily and they had less knowledge (20.00%)

about that total cost of per meal provided by the government is Rs. 3.11 for primary children and Rs. 4.65 for upper primary children. This might be due to the reason that they were not fully aware of the norms and guidelines of the mid day meal programme set by the Government and other parents who were members of the school development committee were also not fully aware of the guidelines. On the other hand, parents in Jhansi region had higher knowledge (98.30%) about that their children consuming the mid day meal daily. This could be due to the enquiry done by the parents from their children whether their child had consumed the meal or not. If not, what are the reasons behind not consuming the meal. The overall knowledge index was 73.53% i.e. their knowledge is to the extent of 73.53 per cent.

Majority of the parents i.e. 80.80 percent were belonged to high category followed by 19.20 per cent of the parents belonged to medium category and none of the parents were belonged to low category respectively (Table 2a and Fig. 2). The possible reasons might be that school was sending monthly reports about the attendance of the children to their respective parents through which they were able to know that their children were attending the classes daily except holiday or if not attending, what are the reasons behind that were found out during parent-teacher meetings. School children mostly tell their parents about the meal which they ate in the school after coming back to home. This might be the reason for knowing about the mid day meal served every day and consumed by their children. As the community leaders team/school development committee includes parents as the members through them other

parents came to know that cooked food is given to their children in the school.

The possible reason contributing for higher knowledge (96.70%) of the parents about that they send their children to school daily to get proper education might be the awareness and desire of the parents towards providing good education to their children for better future and also the school are meant for providing education to the children for the development of the society.

The higher knowledge level of parents may be due to the reason that they were more concerned for their children education as well as health due to which they were gathering information and details of the implementation and functioning of mid day meal programme in the school during parent-teacher meetings and informal discussion with the community leaders/ school development committee members.

**Table 2: Knowledge of parents about mid day meal programme**

Statement	Dharwad (n=60)		Jhansi (n=60)		Knowledge index
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	
1. Your children attend the classes daily except holiday	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
2. The mid day meal has been served everyday in the school, where your child studies	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
3. Cooked food is distributed to your children in school	60	100.00	60	100.00	100.00
4. Total cost of per meal provided by the government is Rs. 3.11 for primary children and Rs. 4.65 for upper primary children	06	10.00	12	20.00	15.00
5. Nutritional and educational benefits are the benefits of mid day meal programme	47	78.30	43	71.70	75.00
6. You send your children to school daily to get education	58	96.70	45	75.00	85.83
7. Good quality of meal is provided to your children in the school	53	88.30	54	90.00	89.17
8. The programme was started in all over the India	49	81.70	44	73.30	77.50
9. MDMP daily fulfills the one-third diet requirement of a child	24	40.00	17	28.30	34.17
10. MDMP is regulated by central government	56	93.30	26	43.30	68.33
11. MDMP was started in 15 august 1995	52	86.70	28	46.70	66.67
12. Your child consuming the mid day meal daily	54	90.00	59	98.30	94.17
<b>Overall knowledge index</b>					<b>73.53</b>

**Table 2a: Knowledge level of parents about mid day meal programme**

(n=120)			
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low (<4)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (5-8)	23	19.20
3.	High (>8)	97	80.80

Table 3 indicated the knowledge of teachers about mid day meal programme. In both the regions, teachers had cent per cent knowledge with respect to that the programme was started in all over the India, state Government decides the menu for mid day meal programme, supervision, maintenance of records under mid day meal programme are the responsibilities of the teachers, the best quality of the food /food grains received for the mid day meal, cook prepares the food for school children under mid day meal programme according to the revised guidelines of mid day meal programme 2006, 450 kcal for primary school children (1-5 class) and 700 kcal for upper primary school children (6-8 class) was decided by the central Government, Government has introduced the mid day meal programme to save children from malnutrition, universalization of primary education, central Government regulates the mid day meal programme, separate store room is available for keeping cooked food/food grains and mid day meal programme is inspected monthly by the officials.

Particularly, in Dharwad region teachers had 91.70 percent knowledge about the helper(s)/cook(s) in the school is/are appointed by school committee members/community leaders, parent-teacher association/ school committee members/ community leaders are responsible for monitoring the mid day meal programme at school level, mid day meal programme daily fulfills the one-third diet requirement of a child and nutritional and educational benefits

are the benefits of mid day meal programme. In Jhansi region, teachers had cent percent knowledge about that the helper(s)/cook(s) in the school is/are appointed by school committee members/community leaders, parent-teacher association/school development committee members/community leaders are responsible for monitoring the mid day meal programme at school level, mid day meal programme daily fulfills the one-third diet requirement of a child and nutritional and educational benefits are the benefits of mid day meal programme.. The overall knowledge index was 95.65% i.e. their knowledge is to the extent of 95.65 per cent.

Table 3a and Fig. 3 showed the categorization of teachers according to their knowledge level about mid day meal programme. The cent percent teachers belonged to high category. The probable reasons might be that the teacher plays a very important key role in implementing the mid day meal programme and to make it successful. Teachers were performing their duties such as supervision when children were having the meal and guide them such as to wash hands properly, to prevent the wastage of food, to maintain healthy environment while eating etc. Maintenance of records were also maintained as the separate mid day meal registers were provided by the government to record the details of school children who were enrolled and taking the benefits of mid day meal programme.

**Table 3: Knowledge of teachers about mid day meal programme****(n=23)**

Statement	Dharwad (n=12)		Jhansi (n=11)		Knowledge index
	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	
1.Mid day meal programme was started by Government of India as a centrally sponsored programme in 1995	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
2.State Government decides the menu for mid day meal programme	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
3.Supervision, maintenance of records under mid day meal programme are the responsibilities of the teachers	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
4.The best quality of the food /food grains received for the mid day meal	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
5.Cook prepares the food for school children under mid day meal programme	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
6.Helper(s)/cook(s) in the school is/are appointed by school committee members/community leaders	11	91.70	11	100.00	95.65
7.Parent-teacher association/school development committee members/community leaders are responsible for monitoring the mid day meal programme at school level	11	91.70	11	100.00	95.65
8. The programme was started in all over the India	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
9. MDMP daily fulfills the one-third diet requirement of a child	11	91.70	11	100.00	95.65
10. According to the revised guidelines of MDMP 2006, 450 kcal for primary school children (1-5 class) and 700 kcal for upper primary school children (6-8 class) was decided by the central government	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
11. Government has introduced the MDMP to save children from malnutrition, universalization of primary education	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
12.Central Government regulates the MDM programme	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
13. Total cost of per meal provided by the government is Rs. 3.11 for primary children and Rs. 4.65 for upper primary children	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
14.Nutritional and educational benefits are the benefits of mid day meal programme	11	91.70	11	100.00	95.65
15.Separate store room is available for keeping cooked food/food grains	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
16.Mid day meal programme is inspected monthly by the officials	12	100.00	11	100.00	100.00
<b>Overall knowledge index</b>					<b>95.65</b>

Table 3a: Knowledge level of teachers about mid day meal programme

(n=23)

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (<5)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (6-10)	0	0.00
3.	High (>10)	23	100.0

Best quality of food/food grains is received, the probable reason might be that before serving the food to the children meal is tasted and verified by the teacher. After analyzing if the quality and taste of the food is good/very good and safe then only it is served to the children. Sharma and Saini (2010) revealed that the participation of community members in MDM of the school is one of the good practices of MDM. Sometimes the parents and community members also oversee MDM in the school at the time of serving. Sometimes they do taste the cooked food before serving the food to the children. The state government decides the menu of the mid day meal programme. The valid reason may be that the central government has given permission to the state governments that they may decide the menu of mid day meal because every state has its own food pattern, food habits, custom etc. one menu cannot be fixed for all the states due to different food habits. As the teachers play a key role in implementing the mid day meal programme they were fully aware of the facts, guidelines and norms related to energy requirements, regulation of the programme by the central Government, purpose of starting/launching the programme. The possible reason for availability of separate store room may be the keeping of maintaining the hygiene and cleanliness as a priority so that children will eat healthy, hygienic food and reduced the chances of falling sick. Government officials/functionaries had responsibility of inspecting the implementation of the programme. so that the strengths and weaknesses of the programme can be noticed and inform to higher authority level i.e. Ministry of Human Resource Development for the solutions of the

problems and to updating and formulating the guidelines.

Knowledge of community leaders about mid day meal programme is shown in Table 4. In both the regions, community leaders had cent percent knowledge about that the mid day meal has been served everyday in the school, the mid day meal is served in the afternoon, helper(s)/cook(s) in the school is/are appointed by school committee members/community leaders, the discussion with other school committee members occurs once in every fortnight and menu of the mid day meal programme in schools is decided by the state Government. Particularly, in Dharwad region, community leaders had maximum knowledge (95.00%) with respect to that the mid day meal programme improves the scholastic performance of the children and once in a month a visit/inspection has been conducted by the school committee members/community leaders in the school. MDMP has the provision of providing training to teachers, cooks, helpers and school development management committee for the successful implementation of the programme (90.00%). They had very less knowledge (20.00%) about that mid day meal programme was started by Government of India as a centrally sponsored programme in 1995.

In Jhansi region, community leaders had maximum knowledge (95.00%) about the mid day meal programme has main objective to boost the universalization of primary education and once in a month a visit/inspection has been conducted by the school committee members/community leaders in the school. They had very less knowledge (10.00%) that adequate number of

utensils, storage bins/containers, food supplements and deworming tablets are provided by the state government with raw food material/cooked food to schools and 20.00 per cent knowledge about that mid day

meal programme was started by Government of India as a centrally sponsored programme in 1995. The overall knowledge index was 83.33% i.e. their knowledge is to the extent of 83.33 per cent.

**Table 4: Knowledge of community leaders about mid day meal programme**

(n=40)

Statement	Dharwad (n=20)		Jhansi (n=20)		Knowledge index
	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)	
1. Mid day meal programme was started by Government of India as a centrally sponsored programme in 1995	04	20.00	04	20.00	20.00
2. The mid day meal has been served everyday in the school	20	100.00	20	100.00	100.00
3. The mid day meal is served in the afternoon	20	100.00	20	100.00	100.00
4. Total cost of per meal provided by the government is Rs. 3.11 for primary children and Rs. 4.65 for upper primary children	15	75.00	12	60.00	67.50
5. Helper(s)/cook(s) in the school is/are appointed by school committee members/community leaders	20	100.00	20	100.00	100.00
6. The discussion with other school committee members occurs once in every fortnight	20	100.00	20	100.00	100.00
7. MDMP was started to save children from malnutrition	20	100.00	18	90.00	95.00
8. MDMP has main objective to boost the universalization of primary education	20	100.00	19	95.00	97.50
9. MDMP improves the scholastic performance of the children	19	95.00	15	75.00	85.00
10. Once in a month a visit/inspection has been conducted by the school committee members/community leaders in the school	19	95.00	19	95.00	95.00
11. MDMP has the provision of providing training to teachers, cooks, helpers and school development management committee for the successful implementation of the programme	18	90.00	14	70.00	80.00
12. Adequate number of utensils, storage bins/containers, food supplements and deworming tablets are provided by the state government with raw food material/cooked food to schools	20	100.00	02	10.00	55.00
13. Nutritional and educational benefits are the benefits of mid day meal programme	17	85.00	13	65.00	75.00
14. Mid day meal programme fulfils right to education for children	16	80.00	16	80.00	80.00
15. Menu of the mid day meal programme in schools is decided by the state Government	20	100.00	20	100.00	100.00
<b>Overall knowledge index</b>					<b>83.33</b>

**Table 4a: Knowledge level of community leaders about mid day meal programme (n=40)**

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low (<5)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (6-10)	03	7.50
3.	High (>10)	37	92.50

Table 4a and Fig. 4 depicted the categorization of community leaders according to their knowledge level about mid day meal programme. Majority of community leaders i.e. 92.50 percent belonged to high category followed by only 7.50 per cent of the community leaders belonged to medium category and none of them belonged to low category. The probable reason may be that community leaders/ school development committee members which includes both teachers and parents has the responsibility to ensure that mid day meal should be served in the afternoon every day in the school. The probable reason for appointment of helper/cook may be the fully involvement of community leaders/ school development management committee in appointing the helper/cook. The possible reason for discussion occurs among the school committee members/community leaders once in every fortnight is that they had the responsibility of checking the proper functioning of the programme in the school, checking mid day meal records, to bring school drop outs back to school, arranging the facilities required such as plates, folic acid tablets, water and toilet facility and solving the problems arising during implementation of the programme. To fulfill the duties discussion among the members/ leaders occurs once in a fortnight. The possible reason for deciding menu of the mid day meal programme by the state Government may be the different food habits, customs, dietary patterns of different states.

Thus, it can be concluded that rural school children, parents, teachers, community leaders had higher level of knowledge which showed that Government of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh were successful in creating awareness about the mid day meal programme at small level to a great extent. Some aspects

such as drinking water facility, toilet facility, infrastructure facilities can be improved and public private partnership can also introduced in rural schools of Uttar Pradesh villages to serve better to the rural school children and to achieve the major objectives of the mid day meal programme i.e. nutritional and educational objective.

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