priviet lab.
RESEARCH & PUBLISHING

Priviet Social Sciences Journal

Volume 6
Issue 5 May, 2026

Article 18

18-05-2026

Free nutritious meals program or Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) and the rural political economy: A theory-driven literature review of urban bias, spatial justice, and fiscal dynamics in rural–urban relations

Komang Ariyanto, Saharuddin

To cite this article: Ariyanto, K. & Saharuddin, S. (2026). Free nutritious meals program or Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) and the rural political economy: A theory-driven literature review of urban bias, spatial justice, and fiscal dynamics in rural–urban relations. *Priviet Social Sciences Journal, 6*(5), 215–225. https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i5.1803

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i5.1803

Priviet Social Sciences Journal
E-ISSN 2798-6314
P-ISSN 2798-866X
https://doi.org/10.55942/pssj.v6i5.1803

Volume 6
Issue 5
May Edition 2026

Free nutritious meals program or Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) and the rural political economy: A theory-driven literature review of urban bias, spatial justice, and fiscal dynamics in rural–urban relations

Komang Ariyanto & Saharuddin

Department of Rural Sociology, IPB University, Jl. Raya Darmaga Kampus IPB, Babakan, Kec. Dramaga, Kabupaten Bogor, Jawa Barat 16680, Indonesia
*email: komangariyanto998@gmail.com

Received 10 March 2026
Revised 12 May 2026
Accepted 13 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This article presents a theory-driven literature review of the Free Nutritious Meals Program or Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) through the lens of urban bias theory, structuring the analysis into four distinct pillars: economic opportunity, infrastructural constraints, political risk, and fiscal trade-offs. It examines whether the policy can reduce rural–urban disparities or reinforce the structural rural dependence on the central government. By systematically searching and synthesizing 22 core scientific publications from 2024 to April 2026 via the conceptual approaches of Snyder (2019) and van der Waldt (2021), guided by explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, this review assesses the political–economic implications of the MBG. The synthesis indicates that, based on policy projections and early modeling, MBG has the potential to serve as a rural economic stimulus through increased demand for local food, improvement in farmers' terms of trade, and job creation within village-based food supply chains. Economic multiplier effects also emerge through household income redistribution and strengthening local agricultural product markets. However, the findings also reveal several structural constraints that may reinforce these biases. Documented logistical infrastructure limitations in 3T regions (disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost areas), such as the absence of cold chains and adequate food transportation access, create a reasonable inference that urban vendors will likely dominate food procurement in these areas. Furthermore, the centralized policy design increases the risk of local elite political patronage, the marginalization of microeconomic actors such as school cafeteria vendors, and potential budget leakage. From a fiscal perspective, the large allocation for the MBG creates pressure on financing sustainability and raises the risk of budget substitution away from productive rural sectors. This study concludes that MBG can become an effective instrument for reducing urban bias only if accompanied by governance decentralization, investment in rural logistics infrastructure, procurement transparency, and the integration of local economic actors. As a normative warning, without such reforms, the MBG risks becoming a consumptive policy that reinforces spatial inequality and rural dependence on the central government for funding.

Keywords: development politics; farmers' welfare; free nutritious meals; MBG; rural economy; urban bias theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of human resource quality is a key determinant in achieving the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045 (Agustini, 2025; Azzahra et al., 2025). Indonesia currently faces a fundamental challenge in the form of chronic nutritional problems, with a stunting prevalence of 21.6% in 2023 (Rahim et al., 2025; Waluyo, 2025). This condition is exacerbated by the fact that approximately 41% to 48% of students in Indonesia go to school on an empty stomach, which directly reduces their concentration levels and academic performance (Agustini, 2025; Azzahra et al., 2025; Ritonga & Sazali, 2025). Nutritional problems not only affect individual health but also have implications for long-term economic productivity, as malnutrition during school-age years is associated with lower educational attainment, reduced workforce quality and diminished national competitiveness (Hoddinott et al., 2013; World Bank, 2020). Therefore, school-based nutrition interventions have become an important strategy for accelerating human capital accumulation while simultaneously reducing interregional developmental disparities.

As a policy response, the government launched the Free Nutritious Meals Program or Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG), which targets approximately 82.9 million beneficiaries, including schoolchildren, toddlers, and pregnant women (Aji, 2025; Nurmansyah & Fitriani, 2025). With a budget allocation ranging from IDR 71 trillion to IDR 171 trillion, the MBG is positioned not merely as a social assistance program but also as a strategic investment in human capital (Agustini, 2025; Herdiana, 2025; Nurmansyah & Fitriani, 2025). In the public policy literature, school feeding programs have been shown to generate dual effects, namely, improvements in nutritional status and stimulation of local economies through increased demand for domestic food products (World Bank, 2009; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018). Therefore, the MBG program is not only relevant in the context of health and education, but also holds potential as an instrument for rural economic transformation through a home-grown school feeding approach that integrates local farmers into the food supply chain.

Sociopolitically, the MBG creates a new "arena" in rural–urban relations. Lipton's urban bias theory argues that development in developing countries often results in bias toward urban areas, where resources are disproportionately allocated to cities, whereas agricultural sectors and rural communities remain impoverished (Lipton, 1984). Crucially, Lipton's framework is an analytical model of institutional capture: urban classes control the state apparatus to design resource allocation mechanisms, terms of trade, and technical standards that systematically extract rural surpluses for urban accumulation. In the context of the MBG, this policy has dual potential: it can serve as an instrument for redistributing capital to rural areas through the absorption of local agricultural products (home-grown school feeding), or conversely, it can become an urban populist instrument managed by large city-based vendors, thereby marginalizing local rural producers (Agustini, 2025; Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025; Khatimah et al., 2025; Khatmawati & Putri, 2026). This perspective aligns with the development of political economy arguments that emphasize how large-scale redistributive policies often generate new power relations in the distribution of resources among state actors, markets, and local communities (Bernstein, 2010; Scoones, 2015). Therefore, the implementation of the MBG program needs to be analyzed not only as a nutrition policy but also as a developmental political instrument that has the potential to influence rural economic structures.

Although the literature on school feeding programs is extensive, most studies focus primarily on health and educational outcomes, while the rural political economy dimension has received relatively limited attention. Previous research has emphasized improvements in nutritional status, student attendance, and academic achievement (World Bank, 2009; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018). However, only a few studies have examined how such programs influence rural–urban relations, local economic power distribution, and fiscal dynamics of development. In Indonesia, existing studies on the MBG program tend to be sectoral in nature, focusing on nutritional impacts, budget evaluations, or technical implementation issues (Agustini, 2025; Khatimah et al., 2025; Nurmansyah & Fitriani, 2025). Therefore, they lack a comprehensive synthesis that links the program to the framework of urban bias and rural development policy.

Based on this gap, the present article explicitly positions itself as a theory-driven literature review situated at the intersection of public nutrition studies, the political economy of development, and rural

sociology. Its central academic contribution is to synthesize disparate literature on the MBG through the analytical lens of Michael Lipton's urban bias theory, clarifying how centralized policy designs may either reinforce or reduce spatial inequalities between urban and rural areas. This cross-literature analysis is crucial because large-scale national food redistribution policies, such as MBGs, have the potential to generate structural effects on local economies, including shifts in demand patterns for agricultural products, the formation of new supply chains, and the emergence of power contestation at the village level (Lipton, 1984; Scoones, 2015).

This study explores the political development dimension of the MBG by analyzing scientific publications to examine how this policy affects farmers' welfare, power dynamics at the local level, and logistical challenges in remote areas that have long been neglected by urban-centric policies. Thus, this study aims to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of rural political economy studies while offering policy implications on how the MBG program can be designed as an instrument to reduce urban bias and strengthen local economies. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for formulating policies that are more inclusive, transparent, and spatially equitable in the implementation of national nutrition programs in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a theory-driven literature review method. It is crucial to emphasize a conceptual synthesis of the literature aimed at understanding the dynamics of the MBG program from a rural political economy perspective. This approach was selected because it can capture the complexity of the relationships among policies, actors, and social contexts that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative methods, particularly in multilevel and multidisciplinary development policy analyses. The methodological framework refers to the meta-narrative approach developed by Snyder (2019), which enables researchers to identify key themes and trace the evolution of policy discourse across different stakeholder groups (Aji, 2025; Nango et al., 2025). This approach facilitates the synthesis of scientific publications with heterogeneous characteristics, ranging from macroeconomic analyses and public policy studies to sociological case studies at the local level (Aziz et al., 2025). Through this process, the study inventories empirical findings and traces how the narrative of the MBG program shifted from a nutritional intervention agenda toward a political–economic instrument with implications for rural economic transformation and rural–urban relations.

In addition, this study adopts the realist review approach developed by van der Waldt (2021) to understand how the MBG policy intervention operates across diverse geographical and sociopolitical contexts in Indonesia (Aji, 2025). A realist review is used to address the question of "what works, for whom, and in what circumstances," thereby enabling an explanation of variations in policy implementation across regions with different structural conditions. This approach emphasizes the analysis of causal relationships between centrally designed policies and implementation realities at the local level, particularly in rural areas and 3T regions (frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged areas: *terdepan*, *terluar*, and *tertinggal*) (Fatimah et al., 2024). Methodologically, realist reviews integrate context, mechanism, and outcome to explain the dynamics of public policy implementation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997; van der Waldt, 2021). By combining the meta-narrative and realist review approaches, this study identifies general patterns in the literature and explains why and how the outcomes of MBG implementation differ according to infrastructure conditions, institutional capacity, and local political dynamics. This methodological strategy enables a more comprehensive understanding of the potential of the MBG as an instrument to reduce urban bias, while also revealing the structural barriers that influence policy effectiveness across different regional contexts.

The literature search was conducted across two major academic databases, Google Scholar, and Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), to capture Indonesian context-specific studies. The search period was restricted to publications from 2024 to 2026, as the MBG program under the current administration was newly launched in late 2024. However, foundational theoretical texts (e.g., Lipton, 1984; Bernstein, 2010) and global school feeding frameworks (e.g., World Bank, 2009; Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations, 2018) were exempt from time restrictions to provide a theoretical grounding. The search strings used combined the following keywords: ("Makan Bergizi Gratis" OR "MBG" OR "Free Nutritious Meals" OR "school feeding") AND ("political economy" OR "urban bias" OR "rural development" OR "fiscal" OR "supply chain" OR "3T regions" OR "farmers' welfare").

Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the reviewed literature. A publication was included if it (1) was a peer-reviewed journal article, official government report, or credible policy analysis; (2) specifically discussed the MBG program in Indonesia or directly comparable home-grown school feeding models; (3) addressed the political, economic, fiscal, logistical, or spatial justice dimensions of the policy; and (4) was available in full text. Publications were excluded if they (1) were opinion pieces, news articles, or commentaries lacking empirical or analytical rigor; (2) focused purely on clinical or micronutritional outcomes (e.g., specific vitamin absorption) without discussing systemic policy or economic implications; or (3) were duplicate records in the databases.

The initial database search identified 142 records. After 38 duplicate records were removed, 104 unique records were screened by title and abstract. At this screening stage, 52 records were excluded because they did not meet the topic, document-type, or policy-relevance criteria, leaving 52 full-text articles and reports for eligibility assessment. During full-text assessment, 30 publications were excluded because they did not provide a sufficient political-economic, fiscal, logistical, or spatial-justice focus, or because their analytical rigor was limited. Consequently, 22 core scientific publications formed the final corpus for the qualitative synthesis.

The quality and relevance of the included literature were evaluated using a thematic-appropriate adaptation of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative and policy documents. Each source was evaluated based on (1) the clarity of the research aim or policy objective, (2) the appropriateness of the methodology or analytical framework used, (3) the rigor of the evidence presented, and (4) the relevance of the findings to the urban bias analytical lens. Only studies rated as moderate-to high-quality were included in the final data synthesis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. MBG as an Economic Opportunity: The Rural Stimulus Potential

One of the main arguments for refuting urban bias in the MBG program is the utilization of local food resources (Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025). The reviewed economic analyses and projections indicate that the implementation of the MBG is expected to positively correlate with farmer welfare, proxied by the farmer exchange rate (NTP). The data show a strong relationship of 58.7% between the MBG policy and improvements in Indonesian farmers' welfare, where the NTP score tends to increase by up to 1.8492 points after the program's implementation (Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025). Through the mechanism of additional demand for agricultural products (rice, vegetables, eggs, and milk), producer-level prices in rural areas are projected to increase, which could directly increase the real income of farming households.

Within the framework of Lipton's urban bias theory, the rural sector is chronically impoverished because the "terms of trade" are structurally turned against it, transferring surplus goods to urban centers (Lipton, 1984). MBG's home-grown school feeding concept attempts to reverse this mechanism. By requiring Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units or Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi (SPPG) to source up to 95% of food inputs from local farmers, livestock producers, and fishers (Ayuni, 2025), the policy intervenes directly in terms of trade, aiming to retain rural surplus within rural economies rather than allowing it to be captured by urban intermediaries.

Theoretically, the economic multiplier effect of the MBG in rural areas can be inferred from strengthened demand, which directly creates market certainty for local producers. The program generates additional aggregate demand for horticultural, livestock, and fishery commodities that were previously volatile, thereby stabilizing producer-level prices. With regular procurement contracts to meet MBG kitchen requirements, farmers gain guaranteed purchase agreements for their harvests, resulting in projected real income increases of up to 1.5–2.0 times the Regional Minimum Wage or Upah Minimum

Regional (UMR) (Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025). Simultaneously, new economic activities emerge within supply chains, ranging from crop collection and initial processing to the distribution of food inputs to nutrition-service units. In aggregate, the program is projected to absorb up to 1.5 million direct workers, particularly housewives and unemployed youth engaged in kitchen operations, packaging, and logistics distribution (Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025; Thawley et al., 2024).

Additionally, multiplier effects arise from the redistribution of farming household income. In many rural areas, food expenditures can account for approximately 60% of total household income; thus, providing free meals to schoolchildren directly reduces household consumption burden (Andriyanty & Widyastutik, 2025; Beruh & Lusiana, 2026). This reduction increases discretionary income, which can be allocated to productive investments. Therefore, based on these theoretical projections, the MBG has the potential to function not only as a nutrition program but also as an economic redistribution instrument that accelerates sustainable local economic circulation in rural areas.

3.2. Infrastructural Constraint: Spatial Inequality in Logistics and Standards

Although the MBG program is, in theory, oriented toward rural areas, a critical analysis of the reviewed empirical literature reveals physical constraints that reflect spatial inequality. The synthesized literature suggests that logistics infrastructure in rural Eastern Indonesia (Papua, NTT, and Maluku) still lags significantly behind that in urban regions in Java (Fatimah et al., 2024). A reasonable inference from the literature is that urban bias in program implementation is evident in the disparity in logistical facilities between urban and rural areas. The absence of cold chain systems and cold storage facilities in many rural locations causes fresh food from local farmers to be vulnerable to spoilage before distribution to beneficiaries. Most rural distributors still rely on motorcycles or open-bed vehicles without specialized refrigeration systems, even though fresh food items are highly sensitive to heat exposure (Khatmawati & Putri, 2026). Consequently, schools or nutrition service units in rural areas are often forced to rely on supplies from urban regions with more adequate infrastructure, limiting the absorption of local economic potential.

Critically, these logistical constraints must be analyzed through Lipton's assertion that the state apparatus designs institutional rules based on "urban efficiency logic," thereby structurally disregarding rural realities (Lipton, 1984). In the MBG, this urban efficiency logic is codified through logistics standards and SPPG kitchen requirements, specifically, the capacity to produce approximately 3,000 portions per day. These rigid standards do not align with the electricity, water supply, and basic infrastructure capacities of remote areas. This is not merely a technical mismatch but a manifestation of institutional urban bias. By imposing urban-centric operational standards, the state structurally disqualifies rural producers and local Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) from participating in supply chains.

This mismatch structurally hinders local providers from meeting technical requirements, creating a reasonable inference that large urban vendors are likely to dominate food procurement chains in rural areas. Consequently, vendor dominance shifts from rural to urban capital producers. This reproduces rural subordination by converting rural areas into mere consumption zones for urban-produced goods, directly validating Lipton's thesis that development policies are captured by urban elite alliances to extract the greatest benefits from programs intended for rural communities (Lipton, 1984). Furthermore, documented patterns indicate that urban bias is reflected in the centralized pattern of program pilot testing and supervision, which is predominantly conducted in areas with strong infrastructure capacity, such as Tangerang, Bogor, and Jakarta (Aji, 2025; Kiftiyah et al., 2025; Rahayu, 2025). The concentration of oversight in urban centers creates a "blind spot" for rural systemic failures, as implementation standards are benchmarked against urban successes, leaving rural areas exposed to greater risks, as evidenced by the reported food poisoning cases in areas with limited kitchen capacity.

3.3. Political Risk: Elite Patronage and Microeconomic Dispossession

Within the dimension of development politics, the MBG program should not be understood merely as a nutritional intervention but rather as a site of power contestation, where the interests of local and central actors intersect (Agustini, 2025; Beruh & Lusiana, 2026). Theoretically, Lipton argues that the

urban class—including bureaucrats and political elites—tends to dominate state machinery to channel surplus resources according to its interests (Lipton, 1984). Operationally, the National Nutrition Agency or Badan Bergizi Nasional (BGN) manages the MBG with massive central budget allocations, whereas at the local level, implementation is carried out through SPPGs involving coordination among local governments, village authorities, and SMEs (Beruh & Lusiana, 2026; Dzakiyah et al., 2025).

A deeper application of urban bias theory reveals that MBG procurement rules serve as a critical mechanism for elite capture and surplus-extraction. Literature reviews of local implementations, such as findings in Southeast Aceh Regency, reveal that the mechanism for selecting food vendors can be exploited by village elites to build political loyalty networks through the distribution of procurement contracts to specific interest groups (Beruh & Lusiana, 2026). In Lipton's framework, local elites function as extensions of the urban class—they are rural brokers who facilitate the extraction of state surplus. By controlling vendor selection, these elites ensure that lucrative procurement contracts are channeled to urban-connected vendors or local rent seekers rather than independent rural producers. This shifts the program's orientation from nutritional improvement and rural empowerment to political consolidation and rural subordination.

Furthermore, the current MBG policy design risks marginalizing microeconomic actors. Field observations indicate that school cafeteria vendors in rural areas reported drastic income declines—up to 70%— because students received free meals (Hermawati et al., 2025). Without inclusive strategies that integrate local vendors into the supply chain, MBG presents a normative risk of driving "capital dispossession" among small rural economic groups in pursuit of central technocratic targets (Azzahra et al., 2025; Hermawati et al., 2025). Additionally, bureaucratic centralism reinforces the erosion of autonomy in schools. Schools often function as passive beneficiaries without the authority to determine menus or select vendors, as strategic decisions are centralized within SPPGs (Dwi et al., 2025). The gap between policy architects at the central level and frontline implementers hinders program adaptation to local needs and increases administrative costs and the risk of budget leakage (Thawley et al., 2024). The government's centralized communication pattern also limits public access to information regarding implementation challenges, creating bureaucratic "dark spaces" that weaken accountability (Dzakiyah et al., 2025).

3.4. Fiscal Trade-off: The "Robin Hood" Burden and Budget Substitution

The MBG program is frequently labeled a "Robin Hood" policy—an instrument for redistributing state resources to support the most vulnerable groups (Khatimah et al., 2025). However, through the lens of urban bias theory, fiscal allocation is the primary instrument of rural subordination. Lipton (1984) argues that the state systematically squeezes the rural sector by underinvesting in rural productive infrastructure while taxing or diverting rural surpluses to fund urban-convenient consumption. The reviewed policy documents indicate that the government allocated IDR 71 trillion in the 2025 draft state budget for the initial phase of the MBG, which is projected to expand to between IDR 400 trillion and IDR 500 trillion by 2029 (Aji, 2025; Nurmansyah & Fitriani, 2025; Thawley et al., 2024).

Critically, the fiscal dynamics of the MBG Program reveal anomalies that reinforce the urban bias thesis while posing risks to the long-term development stability. The magnitude of government spending commitments raises concerns regarding Indonesia's fiscal sustainability. From a political economy standpoint, this aligns with warnings that developing countries often undertake large-scale consumption spending to secure political legitimacy, potentially triggering macroeconomic pressures (Blomqvist & Lundahl, 2002; Lipton, 1984). Redistributive policies framed as "Robin Hood" approaches carry a plausible risk of generating budget-squeezing effects, where funding for productive rural sectors may decline to support consumption-based programs (Dwijayanti, 2024).

The mechanism of budget substitution in the MBG directly reflects urban bias in resource allocation. There is a documented risk that essential rural development funds, such as village road improvements or educational facilities, may be diverted to finance the large-scale consumptive spending of MBGs (Agustini, 2025; Ayuni, 2025; Waluyo, 2025). Recent observations of cuts to higher-education funding, reductions in research financing, and cancellations of infrastructure projects provide early empirical signals of budgetary contestation (Aprillia & Azzahra, 2025; Ayuni, 2025; Kiftiyah et al., 2025). This fiscal trade-off is

structurally biased: long-term rural productive capital (infrastructure, human capital investment) is sacrificed for a consumptive program that, as shown in the infrastructural constraint analysis, predominantly benefits urban vendors. This reproduces rural subordination by keeping rural areas dependent on state consumptive transfers rather than building their structural economic independence.

Furthermore, MBG's fiscal dynamics highlight disparities in regional fiscal capacity, which may exacerbate spatial inequality. Discussions have emerged regarding the contribution of regional budgets (APBDs) to support MBG operations. Encouraging regional contributions could increase fiscal burdens for disadvantaged 3T regions with limited local revenue, potentially reducing allocations for basic healthcare services and rural infrastructure improvements (Herdiana, 2025; Rahayu, 2025; Ritonga & Sazali, 2025). Moreover, Indonesia's complex bureaucracy generates high collection costs, leading to administrative inefficiencies and increasing the risk of leakage through rent-seeking practices at the local level (Lipton, 1984; Thawley et al., 2024; Oktawila et al., 2025). These conditions are compounded by sociopolitical tensions, such as student protests reflecting resistance to government fiscal priorities, indicating fragile policy legitimacy and a dilemma between short-term welfare goals and long-term structural development (Maulana et al., 2025; Waluyo, 2025).

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the MBG Program in Indonesia serves as a critical testing ground for the government's commitment to addressing urban bias. As demonstrated in this theory-driven literature review, the analysis separates MBG dynamics into four distinct analytical pillars. First, as an economic opportunity, synthesized evidence suggests that MBG has the potential to function as a positive catalyst for rural economies through the absorption of local agricultural products and the creation of jobs. Second, regarding infrastructural constraints, documented logistical limitations in 3T regions strongly suggest that urban vendors will dominate procurement due to rigid standards and the absence of cold chains in rural areas. Third, concerning political risk, the structural design of the MBG opens space for local elite patronage and the marginalization of microeconomic actors, such as school canteen vendors. Fourth, in terms of fiscal trade-offs, massive allocation creates pressure on financing sustainability and raises the risk of budget substitution away from productive rural sectors.

As a normative warning, if not managed in accordance with good governance principles, the MBG risks becoming a consumptive social assistance policy in which capital flows back to large urban vendors, whereas rural areas remain mere recipients of food distribution without sustainable economic empowerment. The policy implications of the MBG call for a more decentralized and inclusive approach to local economic development. The central government should grant greater autonomy to villages and local governments in determining food suppliers, with the requirement that at least 95% of the food ingredients be sourced from local MSMEs surrounding schools. Moreover, investing in logistics infrastructure, particularly in 3T regions, is essential. Digital transparency should also be enhanced through community-based reporting systems to ensure that large-scale budget allocations remain accountable and protected from rent-seeking practices. Furthermore, integrating school cafeteria vendors as cooking partners or distribution agents is an important step in preventing capital dispossession. Thus, the MBG should be understood not merely as a nutrition program but also as a development instrument capable of strengthening food security, reducing regional disparities, and promoting sustainable rural economic transformation.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

KA contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, resources, and writing of the original draft. S contributed to the conceptualization, validation, formal analysis, writing, review, and editing. Both authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

Funding

This study did not receive any external funding.

Notes on Contributors

Komang Ariyanto
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0331-9653
Komang Ariyanto is a researcher and student in the fields of sociology and anthropology. He is affiliated with IPB University and the University of Lampung. His research interests include rural sociology, with a focus on rural development, agrarian studies, youth studies, ecology and livelihood studies.

Saharuddin
Saharuddin is a lecturer in rural sociology. He is affiliated with IPB University. His research interests include rural sociology, focusing on agricultural socioeconomics, ecological anthropology, and social development management.

REFERENCES

Agustini, U. (2025). Efektivitas dan tantangan kebijakan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis sebagai intervensi pendidikan di Indonesia (Effectiveness and challenges of the Free Nutritious Meal Program policy as an educational intervention in Indonesia). *Jurnal Kiprah Pendidikan, 4*(3), 362–368. https://doi.org/10.33578/kpd.v4i3.p362-368

Aji, W. T. (2025). Makan Bergizi Gratis di era Prabowo-Gibran: Solusi untuk rakyat atau beban baru? (Free Nutritious Meals in the Prabowo-Gibran era: A solution for the people or a new burden?). *NAAFI: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa, 1*(3), 215–226. https://jurnal.stkip-majenang.ac.id/index.php/naafi/article/view/134

Andriyanty, R., & Widyastutik, W. (2025). Kebijakan Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG): Bagaimana pengaruhnya terhadap kesejahteraan petani (Free Nutritious Meal policy: How does it affect farmers' welfare?). *Risalah Kebijakan Pertanian dan Lingkungan: Rumusan Kajian Strategis Bidang Pertanian dan Lingkungan, 12*(2), 184–190. https://doi.org/10.29244/jkebijakan.v12i2.66225

Aprillia, N. P., & Azzahra, M. U. D. (2025). Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG): Antara legacy project dan solusi stunting (The Free Nutritious Meal Program: Between a legacy project and a stunting solution). *Journal of Information Systems and Management, 4*(5), 19–22. https://jisma.org/index.php/jisma/article/view/1229

Ayuni, D. T. (2025). Dilema pelaksanaan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis pada siswa (The dilemma of implementing the Free Nutritious Meal Program for students). *Triwikrama: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Sosial, 8*(8), 21–30. https://cibangsa.com/index.php/triwikrama/article/view/779

Aziz, M. A., Alamanda, D. T., Fadhlurrohman, M. I., & Kurniati, D. M. (2025). Persepsi masyarakat terhadap Program Makan Siang Gratis menggunakan text network analysis (TNA) (Public perception of the Free Lunch Program using text network analysis). *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik, 11*(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jiap.2025.011.02.8

Azzahra, N., Dharmawan, A. D., Mardatilah, A. F., Habibi, M. I., Aryani, V. A. P., & Suhardi, S. (2025). Pelaksanaan uji coba Program Makan Bergizi Gratis di SMP Negeri 4 Tangerang: Penelitian (Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program trial at SMP Negeri 4 Tangerang: Research). *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat dan Riset Pendidikan, 3*(4), 5036–5044. https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.1335

Bernstein, H. (2010). *Class dynamics of agrarian change*. Kumarian Press.

Beruh, M. K. A., & Lusiana, L. (2026). Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) dan implikasi sosial, ekonomi, dan politik terhadap masyarakat Kabupaten Aceh Tenggara, Aceh, Indonesia (The Free Nutritious Meal Program and its social, economic, and political implications for the people of Southeast Aceh Regency, Aceh, Indonesia). *Indonesian Social Science Review, 4*(1), 59–67. https://doi.org/10.61105/issr.v4i1.380

Blomqvist, H. C., & Lundahl, M. (2002). Urban bias. In H. C. Blomqvist & M. Lundahl (Eds.), *The distorted economy* (pp. 108–130). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781403914347_7

Dwi K. S., F. A., Jamaluddin, J., Sari, W. I. R., & Rachmaliana, L. (2025). Government social policy: Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG). *Forum Ekonomi: Jurnal Ekonomi, Manajemen dan Akuntansi, 27*(Special Issue), 134–142. https://e-journals2.unmul.ac.id/index.php/FORUMEKONOMI/article/view/4457

Dwijayanti, A. (2024). Policy spillover: Analisis jaringan dampak kebijakan makan siang bergizi gratis terhadap sektor pertanian (Policy spillover: A network analysis of the impact of the free nutritious lunch policy on the agricultural sector). *Jurnal Administrasi Publik, 20*(2), 281–308. https://doi.org/10.52316/jap.v20i2.435

Dzakiyah, A. N., Andryandy, T., Kuswanto, F. R. H., & Syahrevi, I. (2025). Strategi public relations politik pemerintahan Prabowo dalam Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (The Prabowo government's political public relations strategy in the Free Nutritious Meal Program). *Al-Zayn: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial & Hukum, 3*(5), 6885–6899. https://doi.org/10.61104/alz.v3i5.2312

Fatimah, S., Rasyid, A., Anirwan, A., Qamal, Q., & Arwakon, H. O. (2024). Kebijakan Makan Bergizi Gratis di Indonesia Timur: Tantangan, implementasi, dan solusi untuk ketahanan pangan (Free Nutritious Meal policy in Eastern Indonesia: Challenges, implementation, and solutions for food security). *Journal of Governance and Policy Innovation, 4*(1), 14–21. https://doi.org/10.51577/jgpi.v4i1.641

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2018). *Home-grown school feeding: A framework to link school feeding with local agricultural production*. https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d082f20d-a9b4-4a3e-9574-3551ef74043e/content

Herdiana, D. (2025). Implementasi kebijakan Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG): Faktor-faktor pendorong dan penghambat (Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal policy: Supporting and inhibiting factors). *Madani: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin, 3*(2), 470–478. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15063556

Hermawati, L., Abdullah, M. N. A., & Rizaldi, M. R. (2025). Dampak kebijakan Makan Bergizi Gratis pada pedagang kantin: Sebuah analisis teori konflik Max Weber (The impact of the Free Nutritious Meal policy on canteen vendors: An analysis using Max Weber's conflict theory). *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan, 11*(10.D), 155–160. https://jurnal.peneliti.net/index.php/JIWP/article/view/11814

Hoddinott, J., Alderman, H., Behrman, J. R., Haddad, L., & Horton, S. (2013). The economic rationale for investing in stunting reduction. *Maternal & Child Nutrition, 9*(S2), 69–82. https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.12080

Khatimah, A. W. N., Kamaruddin, S. A., & Awaru, A. O. T. (2025). Rasionalisme dalam kebijakan publik: Analisis dampak Program Makan Bergizi Gratis terhadap kesejahteraan pelajar: Penelitian (Rationalism in public policy: An analysis of the impact of the Free Nutritious Meal Program on student welfare: Research). *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat dan Riset Pendidikan, 3*(4), 1969–1976. https://doi.org/10.31004/jerkin.v3i4.815

Khatmawati, H., & Putri, Y. E. (2026). Model rantai pasok berkelanjutan pada Program Makan Bergizi Gratis berbasis pangan lokal di Kabupaten Sumbawa (A sustainable supply chain model for the local food-based Free Nutritious Meal Program in Sumbawa Regency). *Integrative Perspectives of Social and Science Journal, 3*(1), 418–437. https://ipssj.com/index.php/ojs/article/view/1155

Kiftiyah, A., Palestina, F. A., Abshar, F. U., & Rofiah, K. (2025). Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) dalam perspektif keadilan sosial dan dinamika sosial-politik (The Free Nutritious Meal Program from the perspective of social justice and socio-political dynamics). *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan, 5*(1), 101–112. https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v5i1.726

Lipton, M. (1984). Urban bias revisited. *The Journal of Development Studies, 20*(3), 139–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388408421910

Maulana, H. F., Rando, R., Hastuti, H., Zaitullah, L. O. M., & Ferizka, Z. (2025). Formulation of a model for the dissemination of government policy issues in online media and YouTube in Indonesia. *Frontiers in Communication, 10*, Article 1710197. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1710197

Nango, M., Purwoko, B., Hazim, M., & Karwanto, K. (2025). Makan Bergizi Gratis: Strategi kebijakan publik menuju Generasi Emas Indonesia 2045 (Free Nutritious Meals: A public policy strategy toward Indonesia's Golden Generation 2045). *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik, 25*(2), 354–368. https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v25i2.991

Nurmansyah, M. I., & Fitriani, A. (2025). Applying an implementation research lens to Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Program. *Indonesian Journal of Health Administration, 13*(2), 133–141. https://doi.org/10.20473/jaki.v13i2.2025.133-141

Oktawila, D., Bagijo, H. E., & Tanudjaja, T. (2025). Kedudukan lembaga negara dalam Makan Bergizi Gratis (The position of state institutions in the Free Nutritious Meal Program). *Jurnal Media Informatika, 6*(3), 1595–1602. https://doi.org/10.55338/jumin.v6i3.5915

Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realistic evaluation*. SAGE Publications.

Rahayu, L. F. (2025). Dinamika dukungan politik terhadap Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) di Indonesia (The dynamics of political support for the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Indonesia). *Pandita: Interdisciplinary Journal of Public Affairs, 8*(2), 815–831. https://doi.org/10.61332/ijpa.v8i2.381

Rahim, H., Muhammad, S., Suryanto, S., Nurlela, A., & Muallim, H. (2025). Sustainability of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG): An analysis of the effectiveness of the Quadruple Helix model. *Perspektif, 14*(4), 725–733. https://doi.org/10.31289/perspektif.v14i4.16036

Ritonga, A. R., & Sazali, H. (2025). Analisis komunikasi pembangunan terhadap regulasi dan kebijakan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (Development communication analysis of the regulation and policy of the Free Nutritious Meal Program). *Padaseva: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat, 1*(1), 32–40. https://e-journal.samsarainstitute.com/jhpm/article/view/77

Scoones, I. (2015). *Sustainable livelihoods and rural development*. Practical Action Publishing. https://doi.org/10.3362/9781780448749

Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research, 104*, 333–339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

Thawley, C., Crystallin, M., & Verico, K. (2024). Towards a higher growth path for Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 60*(3), 247–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2024.2432035

van der Waldt, G. (2021). Elucidating the application of literature reviews and literature surveys in social science research. *Administratio Publica, 29*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-adminpub_v29_n1_a3

Waluyo, S. D. (2025). Kebijakan Makanan Bergizi Gratis: Tinjauan ekonomi politik dalam kesejahteraan dan ketahanan pangan (Free Nutritious Food policy: A political economy review of welfare and food

security). *Dinamika: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Administrasi Negara, 12*(1), 144–151. https://doi.org/10.25157/dak.v12i1.18223

World Bank. (2009). Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector. World Bank Publications. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-7974-5

World Bank. (2020). *The Human Capital Index 2020 update: Human capital in the time of COVID-19*. World Bank. https://doi.org/10.1596/34432