

Impact of Mid Day Meal on Enrollment, Attendance and Retention of Primary School Children

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Abstract: Four important areas are identified for achieving the goal of Education for all. These are Access to Education, Enrolment of children, and Retention of the enrolled children as well as in academic achievement. The Mid Day Meal scheme is an effort to achieve and facilitate these objectives. The objective of present study is to evaluate the impact of mid day meal on enrollment, attendance and retention of primary school children in Uttar Pradesh. MDM and non MDM schools are selected by cluster random sampling method. Result revealed that MDM scheme prove a major mean in improving enrollment and attendance comparatively. Some efforts should be needed to increase retention of students by increasing variety and quality of Mid Day Meal and by incorporating interesting method of teaching.

Keywords: Enrollment, Attendance, Retention, Mid Day Meal. Primary schools children

1. Introduction

The government has left no stone unturned to achieve the aim of universalisation of elementary education by launching various schemes to enroll and retain the maximum number of students and minimize the dropout rate. One such scheme launched by the government was Mid day meal scheme that aims to primary and upper primary level in improving the nutritional status of children, encouraging poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities.

The success of this scheme is illustrated by the tremendous increase in the school participation and enrolment rates in Tamil Nadu[1]. Various studies have been conducted in India about mid-day meal scheme and students' achievement in schools. Most of the studies revealed that there exist a positive relationship between mid-day meal program and enrolment and attendance of students[2]-[3]-[4]-[5]

Education plays a vital role in the development of human potential. Free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years is the constitutional commitment and it is estimated that Elementary school children (6-14 years) form about 20% of the total population[6]. The important thing to consider is that the expenditures on this programme have been huge. For example in 2003-04 the expenditure was Rs. 1400 crores and 2007-2008 budget of the central government has allocated about Rs. 7324 crores for the MDM scheme. Performance audit (2011) conducted by Centre for Environment and Food Security on food security schemes in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh; The sample survey in 130 villages spread over 12 districts of Orissa and Uttar Pradesh (Bundelkhand) was carried out and reported that performance of the MDM scheme is far better in Orissa in comparison with the Uttar Pradesh. An overwhelming 86.7 per cent of Orissa's children were getting second best category of MDM (regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal), only 51.8 per cent of children in UP were getting

regular but inadequate and unsatisfactory meal in their schools[7].

Objective- In view of above, it is imperative to evaluate the impact of mid day meal on enrollment, attendance and retention of primary school children

2. Materials and Methods

Cluster random sampling method was used to collect sample for this study. Out of Two Tehsils and seven Community Development Blocks in Auraiya district (Uttar Pradesh) Bidhuna Tehsil and Ajeetmal Community Development block were selected randomly. Total 12 schools were selected. Three Government primary schools (with MDM scheme) and three non government primary school (without MDM scheme) of same geographical area were selected randomly from rural area of Bidhuna tehsil. Similarly, from Ajeetmal block three Government primary schools (with MDM scheme) and three non government primary school (without MDM scheme) of same geographical area were selected randomly.

Tools developed- A predesigned and pretested proforma was used as a tool for collection of information for each parameter. Data regarding enrollment, attendance and retention of children was collected from school records.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Enrollment

The enrollment of children in a class or a school depicts the number of children admitted in that class or school for that particular academic year.

It is evident from fig.1 that enrollment of both boys and girls was higher in MDM schools as compared to non MDM school. Boys enrollment was significantly higher in both MDM and non MDM schools as compared to girls. Positive intervention of Mid Day Meal was reported in universalisation of primary education by increasing

enrolment and attendance[8]. It was Stated that the introduction of menu based Mid Day Meal has a positive impact on enrolment and attendance of children[9].The closest to this study in the literature is a comparative analysis of government and private schools in Gorakhpur

and Saharanpur districts in UP [10].This study found that the enrolment rate was higher in government than in private schools. Most of the studies

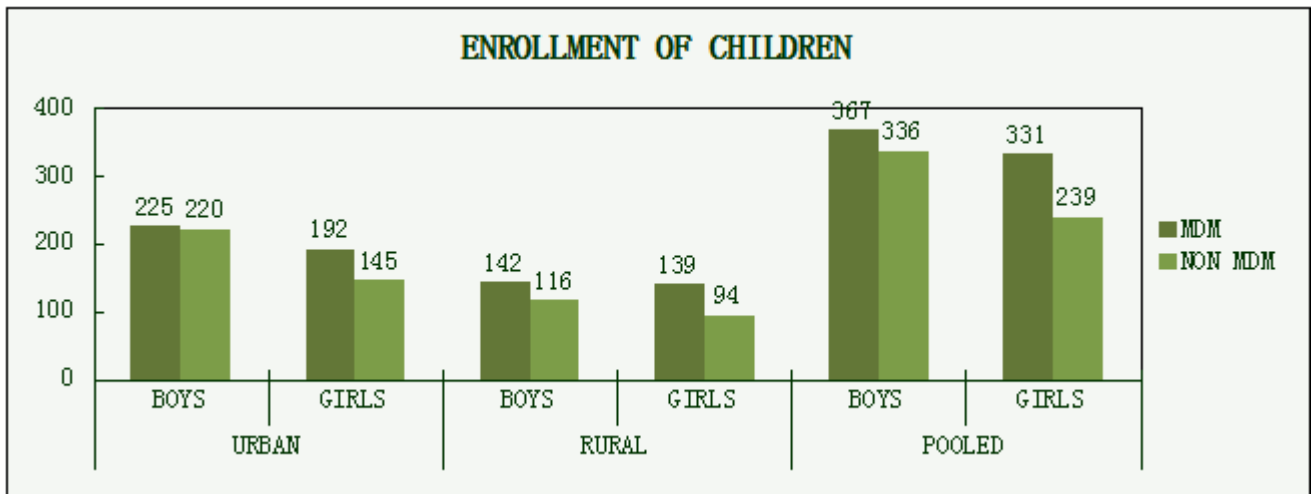


Figure 1: Enrollment of children

3.2 Attendance

It represents the total number of children who attended the class on total working days in an academic year, out of the total children enrolled in a class or school in the respective academic session.

Fig.2 clearly depicts the higher attendance percentage in MDM school children of urban area. Similar trend was observed in rural area across gender. Difference in attendance percentage between both MDM and non MDM

school children was more in urban area as compared to rural area.

It was revealed that there exist a positive relationship between mid-day meal program and enrolment and attendance of students in schools[2]-[3]-[4]-[5]

It was found that the percentage of children with better attendance (> 60% of working days) was higher (97.8%) in MDM schools than in non-MDM schools (95%) (p <0.001)[11].

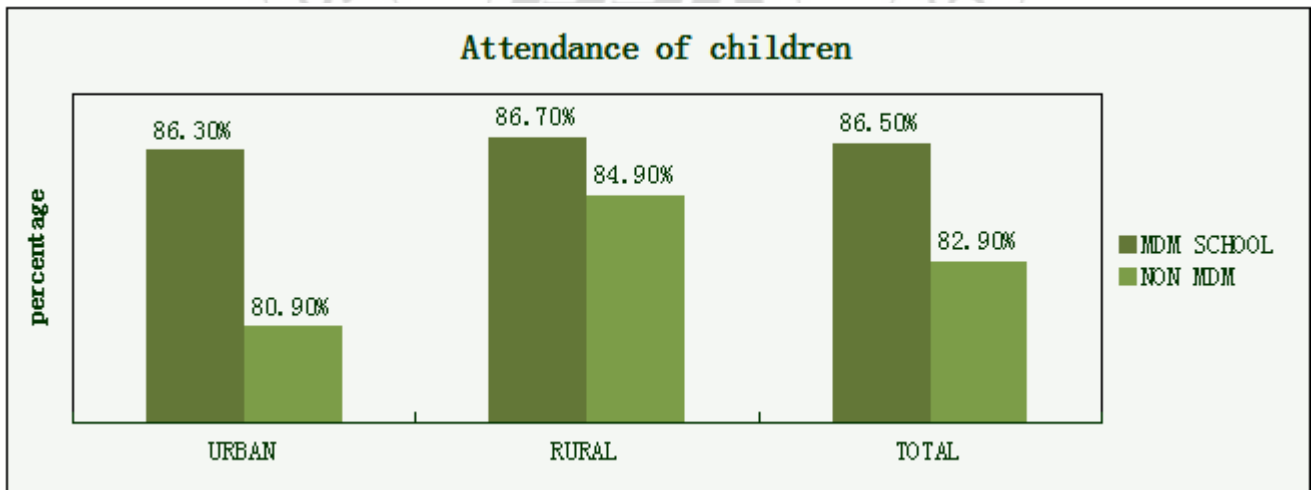


Figure 2: Attendance of children

3.3 Retention

Out of the total children enrolled in a class in an academic year, the total number of children who continued their education in the respective class and appeared for the end term examinations of that class refers to the number of retained children in a class for that academic year.

Retention percentage was higher in urban non MDM school boys and girls that is 98.67 and 98% respectively, where as in rural area opposite picture was observed across gender (Fig.3). Results of the study on the educational component indicated improved attendance, increased retention rate in Andhra Pradesh [12]

It was reported that All the sample schools in states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Meghalaya

indicated that there has been an increase in the retention rates. Most of the sample schools in M.P., Andhra Pradesh,

Arunachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh have attributed an increase in retention rates [13]

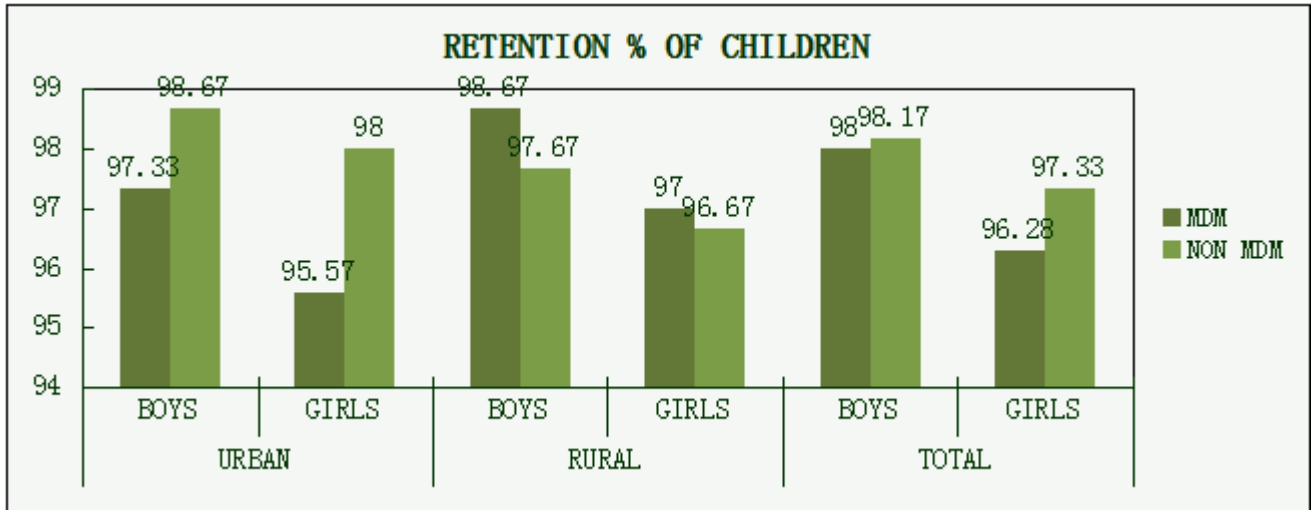


Figure 3: Retention of children

In a nutshell it can be concluded that MDM scheme should continue in the state as it has positive impact on enrollment and attendance of children. Retention rate is yet to improve. This would change the inclination of masses towards government schools and thus uplifting the education status.

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