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MUSLIM COMMUNITY OPINION ON THE FREE NUTRITIOUS MEAL PROGRAM AS A SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY: A STUDY IN SEI SENTOSA VILLAGE, LABUHANBATU REGENCY

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Abstract

This study examines public opinion within a Muslim community regarding the Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Program Makan Bergizi Gratis*/MBG) as a government social welfare policy in Sei Sentosa Village, Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency. Situated within the framework of Islamic community development and social welfare, the study explores community experiences, perceptions, and responses toward the program's implementation. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with seven informants comprising a program coordinator, a village secretary, a teacher, two parents, and two students as program beneficiaries, complemented by field observation and documentation. The findings indicate that community opinion toward the MBG Program is generally positive. The program is perceived as effective in fulfilling students' nutritional needs, improving learning concentration and motivation, and providing economic relief for families by reducing household expenditure. The program also contributes to improving community welfare, particularly in health and education — two dimensions closely aligned with Islamic values of human dignity (*karamah*) and collective well-being (*maslahah*). However, implementation challenges remain, including delays in food distribution, limited menu variation, and inconsistent food quality. Public opinion manifests not only as support but also as constructive social critique reflecting the community's role as active participants in policy governance. This study concludes that the success of the MBG Program is strongly influenced by implementation effectiveness, service quality, and program socialization, and recommends continuous evaluation to optimize its social welfare outcomes.

Keywords: Islamic Community Development; Social Welfare Policy; Free Nutritious Meal Program; Public Opinion; Community Participation; Maslahah.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji opini publik masyarakat Muslim terhadap Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) sebagai kebijakan kesejahteraan sosial pemerintah di Desa Sei Sentosa, Kecamatan Panai Hulu, Kabupaten Labuhanbatu. Penelitian ini berangkat dari kerangka pengembangan masyarakat Islam dan kesejahteraan sosial, dengan mengeksplorasi pengalaman, persepsi, dan respons masyarakat terhadap pelaksanaan program. Metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap tujuh informan yang terdiri atas koordinator program, sekretaris desa, guru, dua orang wali murid, dan dua siswa sebagai penerima manfaat, serta diperkuat dengan observasi lapangan dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa opini publik masyarakat terhadap Program MBG pada umumnya bersifat positif. Program ini dinilai efektif dalam membantu pemenuhan kebutuhan gizi siswa, meningkatkan konsentrasi dan semangat belajar, serta memberikan manfaat ekonomi bagi keluarga melalui pengurangan beban pengeluaran rumah tangga. Program ini juga berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kesejahteraan masyarakat dalam aspek kesehatan dan pendidikan – dua dimensi yang sejalan dengan nilai Islam tentang kemuliaan manusia (karamah) dan kemaslahatan bersama (maslahah). Namun demikian, pelaksanaan program masih menghadapi kendala seperti keterlambatan distribusi, kurangnya variasi menu, dan kualitas makanan yang belum konsisten. Opini publik yang terbentuk tidak hanya berupa dukungan, tetapi juga kritik konstruktif sebagai bentuk kontrol sosial terhadap kebijakan pemerintah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa keberhasilan Program MBG sangat dipengaruhi oleh efektivitas implementasi, kualitas pelayanan, dan sosialisasi program, serta merekomendasikan evaluasi berkelanjutan untuk mengoptimalkan dampaknya terhadap kesejahteraan masyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam; Kebijakan Kesejahteraan Sosial; Program Makan Bergizi Gratis; Opini Publik; Partisipasi Masyarakat; Maslahah.

INTRODUCTION

Public opinion refers to the collective attitudes, views, and assessments that develop within society toward issues of shared concern.[1] It is formed through processes of social interaction, individual experience, and the influence of media and surrounding environments. In contemporary social life, public opinion holds significant importance because it can shape policy directions, influence community behavior, and determine the course of collective decision-making. Tamba and Kholikin emphasize that social media has transformed the way public opinion is constructed, enabling citizens to interact with government institutions in real time and exercise a form of participatory social control over public policy.[2] This dynamic is particularly relevant in the context of Muslim-majority societies such as Indonesia, where community opinion not only reflects individual

[1]Hamama, S. (2024). Etika Komunikasi dalam Media Sosial: Tantangan dan Solusinya. *Jurnal Selasar KPI: Referensi Media Komunikasi dan Dakwah*, 4(2), 182–197. https://doi.org/10.33507/selasar.v4i2.2608

[2]Tamba, D., & Kholikin, R. A. (2025). Media Sosial dalam Membangun Opini Publik atas Layanan Pemerintah: Kajian Literatur Interaksi Sosial Digital. *Jejaring Administrasi Publik*, 17(2), 113–126. https://doi.org/10.20473/jap.v17i2.79710

preferences but also embodies collective values rooted in Islamic principles of *maslahah* (public interest) and social responsibility.[3]

The concept of public opinion itself carries deep roots in classical political thought. The term derives from the Latin *opinari* (to think or estimate) and *publicus* (belonging to the people), signifying a shared body of attitudes held by members of a community regarding matters of common concern. Cutlip defines public opinion as the aggregate of individual attitudes toward an issue that arises in public discourse and exerts influence over the groups involved.[4] Koestiono et al. further elaborate that in the digital era, public opinion is continuously shaped through social media platforms where information spreads rapidly, reinforces intergroup differences, and enables mass participation in forming shared narratives about social and legal issues.[5] Understanding how public opinion forms — particularly in response to government social programs — is therefore essential for evaluating the legitimacy and effectiveness of public policy.

Public policy, in its broadest sense, constitutes a set of decisions and actions taken by the government to address societal problems and achieve specific goals in the social, economic, and political domains. Desrinelti, Afifah, and Gistituati argue that public policy is inherently connected to community welfare and must be guided by the principle of public interest.[6] The success or failure of a policy depends not only on its design but critically on how effectively it is translated into concrete action in the field, how well resources are mobilized, and how coherently the policy's objectives align with local needs and conditions. In the Indonesian context, public policies targeting vulnerable populations — such as children, pregnant women, and low-income households — serve as key instruments of social development and poverty reduction.[7]

One of the most prominent social welfare policies currently implemented in Indonesia is the Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Program Makan Bergizi Gratis*, MBG). Inaugurated on January 2, 2025, under President Prabowo Subianto's administration, the MBG Program is designed to address widespread nutritional deficiencies in Indonesia — particularly among school-aged children, pregnant women, infants, and nursing mothers. The government allocated a budget of Rp71 trillion in the 2025 state budget (*APBN*) for this program, with an ambitious target of reaching up to 82.9 million beneficiaries when implemented at full scale.[8] The MBG Program is grounded in several key legal frameworks, including Article 28H(1) and Article 34(2–3) of the 1945 Constitution, Law No. 17 of 2023 on Health, Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food, and Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2024 on the National Nutrition Agency (*Badan Gizi Nasional*), which serves as the institutional executor of the program.[9]

The MBG Program is not merely conceived as a consumption-based welfare transfer, but rather as a long-term national investment in the development of quality human

[3]Chapra, M. U. (2001). *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective*. The Islamic Foundation.

[4]Juariyah. (2019). *Opini Publik dan Propaganda*. LPPM Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember.

[5]Koestiono, F., Hapsari, A. P., Permadi, R., Muchlis, M., & Metalia, D. (2025). Pengaruh Media Sosial terhadap Pembentukan Opini Publik tentang Hukum. *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Humaniora*, 6(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.53697/iso.v6i1.3287

[6]Desrinelti, D., Afifah, M., & Gistituati, N. (2021). Kebijakan Publik: Konsep Pelaksanaan. *JRTI (Jurnal Riset Tindakan Indonesia)*, 6(1), 83–88. https://doi.org/10.29210/3003906000

[7]Kiftiyah, A., Palestina, F. A., Abshar, F. U., & Rofiah, K. (2025). Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) dalam Perspektif Keadilan Sosial dan Dinamika Sosial-Politik. *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, 5(1), 101–112.

[8]Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 115 Tahun 2025 tentang Tata Kelola Penyelenggaraan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia.

[9]Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 83 Tahun 2024 tentang Badan Gizi Nasional. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 17 Tahun 2023 tentang Kesehatan; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2012 tentang Pangan.

resources toward the vision of *Indonesia Emas 2045* (Golden Indonesia 2045). Kiftiyah et al. note that the program reflects the state's commitment to realizing social justice and equitable welfare, particularly for groups that have historically been underserved in terms of nutrition and education.[10] The program also generates economic multiplier effects at the local level through the involvement of small businesses, community kitchens, and distribution networks supplied by local farmers and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). However, alongside these aspirations, the program's implementation has also generated diverse public responses ranging from strong support to constructive criticism, reflecting the complexity of large-scale social policy implementation in a geographically and demographically diverse nation.

Empirical research on the MBG Program has produced generally positive assessments, particularly regarding its educational and nutritional impacts. Seventilofa found that the provision of nutritious meals through MBG contributes positively to students' learning concentration, motivation, and classroom engagement.[11] Herniati and Idawati similarly confirmed that the program effectively enhances student enthusiasm for attending school, improves learning participation, and supports overall academic readiness.[12] These findings suggest that the MBG Program goes beyond addressing food insecurity — it also directly supports the educational dimension of human capital development by creating more conducive conditions for learning.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the MBG Program has not been without challenges. Furkan et al. documented that across various regions in Indonesia, the program faces significant administrative and technical obstacles including delays in food distribution, inadequate supporting facilities, inconsistency in food quality, and limited menu variation that does not always suit the preferences of student beneficiaries.[13] These implementation gaps highlight the critical importance of effective coordination among program executors, local governments, and communities. Moreover, Aziz et al., using a Text Network Analysis approach, found that public perceptions of the MBG Program are divided: while one group embraces the program based on its tangible nutritional and economic benefits, another group expresses skepticism, largely shaped by negative narratives circulating on social media that frame the program as a tool of political image-building rather than genuine social welfare.[14]

From the perspective of Islamic community development, the MBG Program intersects directly with core principles of Islamic social ethics. The Islamic concept of *maslahah 'ammah* (general public welfare) mandates that the state fulfills the basic needs of its citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, as a religious and moral obligation.[15] Similarly, the principle of *karamah insaniyyah* (human dignity) underscores that access to adequate nutrition and education is a fundamental right that must be protected by the state. Programs such as MBG therefore carry not only administrative significance but also moral and socio-religious dimensions that resonate deeply within Indonesia's Muslim-majority

[10]Kiftiyah, A., Palestina, F. A., Abshar, F. U., & Rofiah, K. (2025). *Op. cit.*

[11]Seventilofa, I. G. N. O. (2025). The Impact of MBG (Makanan Bergizi Gratis) Program Towards Student Intelligence in Indonesia. *PESOLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1(2), 85–91. https://doi.org/10.59896/pesolah.v1i2.576

[12]Herniati, N., & Idawati. (2025). Efektivitas Program Pemerintah MBG (Makan Bergizi Gratis) terhadap Minat Belajar Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan AURA*, 1–11.

[13]Furkan, I. M., Sari, R. A., Eliza, M. F., Nofrizal, D., Junva, F., Gistituati, N., & Anisah, A. (2025). Mewujudkan makan bergizi gratis: perspektif guru sd dalam implementasi kebijakan. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, *10*(3), 919-927. https://doi.org/10.34125/jmp.v10i3.678

[14]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). *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik (JIAP)*, 11(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jiap.2025.011.02.8

[15]Chapra, M. U. (2001). *Op. cit.*

communities, where expectations of justice (*'adalah*) and collective welfare are central to public evaluations of government legitimacy.

At the local level, public opinion regarding the MBG Program has manifested in nuanced ways. In Sei Sentosa Village, Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency — a rural community with a predominantly Muslim population — the program has generated visible responses from various community stakeholders, including village officials, teachers, parents, and students. Field observations prior to this study suggest that the community generally views the MBG Program as a positive governmental initiative that supports children's nutritional needs and eases the economic burden on low-income families. At the same time, concerns have been raised regarding the consistency of program delivery, the quality and variety of food provided, and the long-term sustainability of the program. Watie et al. note that public opinion in contemporary Indonesia is shaped not only by direct experience but also by the flow of information through social networks and daily interpersonal communication, making opinion formation a complex and multi-layered social process.[16]

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze public opinion within the Muslim community of Sei Sentosa Village regarding the MBG Program as a social welfare policy, to identify the factors that shape community acceptance and criticism, and to examine how these perspectives can serve as evaluative input for improving the program's effectiveness and targeting. Situated within the framework of Islamic community development and social welfare, this study contributes theoretically to the scholarship on community-based public policy evaluation in Muslim-majority contexts, and practically to efforts aimed at optimizing the MBG Program's implementation at the village level. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on Islamic community development while providing actionable recommendations for relevant stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Concept and Theory of Public Opinion

Public opinion constitutes one of the foundational concepts in the study of communication, political science, and social policy. Etymologically, the term derives from the Latin *opinari* (to think or estimate) and *publicus* (belonging to the people), signifying the convergence of individual attitudes into a shared body of views regarding matters of collective concern. Setiadarma explains that public opinion reflects the aggregate of perceptions held by members of a community toward a particular institution, policy, or social issue, and that this aggregate plays a decisive role in determining the legitimacy and social standing of the entity in question.[17] The quality and direction of public opinion — whether positive, negative, or neutral — are substantially determined by how well an institution or policy responds to the actual needs and interests of its public.

Public opinion is not static; it evolves continuously through processes of social interaction, media exposure, and lived experience. Cutlip defines public opinion as a collection of individual views on an issue that arises in public discourse and exerts influence on the groups it concerns, asserting that public opinion encompasses all the attitudes of individuals insofar as they orient behavior toward a commonly shared problem.[18] This definition underscores the inherently collective and action-oriented nature of public

[16]Watie, E. D. S., Safira, C., & Suhariyanto, S. (2024). Pembentukan Opini Publik di Media Sosial pada Isu Pemaksaan Penggunaan Jilbab di Sekolah. *Janaloka: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 2(1), 131–144. https://doi.org/10.26623/janaloka.v2i1.9430

[17]Setiadarma, A. (2021). Kaitan *Public Opinion* dan *Public Relations*. *IKON: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Komunikasi*, 26(3), 214–222.

[18]Juariyah. (2019). *Opini Publik dan Propaganda*. LPPM Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. *(Mengutip definisi Cutlip dalam konteks opini publik)*

opinion: it is not merely passive sentiment but a social force capable of shaping behavioral norms and institutional responses. In democratic societies, public opinion functions simultaneously as a mechanism of social control, a driver of democratic participation, and a barometer of prevailing social attitudes and community values.[19]

In the contemporary digital landscape, the formation of public opinion has been profoundly transformed by social media. Amir et al. argue that social media platforms have become primary arenas in which information circulates rapidly, narratives are constructed collectively, and public opinion is amplified or contested across vast networks of users.[20] Koestiono et al. further demonstrate that social media continuously shapes shared attitudes toward legal and social issues, where user participation in constructing dominant narratives can influence public opinion on a massive scale — often reinforcing polarization between competing groups.[21] These dynamics are directly relevant to how communities form and express their views regarding government social programs such as the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), where both direct experience and mediated narratives simultaneously shape public perception.

Public opinion also performs critical democratic functions. Tamba and Kholikin emphasize that public opinion serves not merely as a form of social expression but as a deliberative mechanism through which citizens hold governments accountable for the quality and equity of their public services.[22] When communities articulate opinions about a policy — whether supportive or critical — they are engaging in a form of participatory governance that can motivate institutional reflection and policy improvement. In the Indonesian context, Watie et al. found that public opinion on contested social issues is significantly shaped by the interplay between direct experience, information received from social networks, and the framing dynamics of social media platforms.[23] Understanding public opinion toward the MBG Program therefore requires attention to both its experiential and mediated dimensions, particularly in rural communities where information flows may differ substantially from urban settings.

B. Public Policy and Its Implementation

Public policy represents the set of decisions, actions, and priorities established by the government in response to societal problems, with the objective of achieving specific social, economic, or political goals. Desrinelti, Afifah, and Gistituati define public policy as a relational framework for achieving desired outcomes through governmental action, emphasizing that the primary stakeholders in public policy-making are government actors whose fundamental obligation is to serve the public interest.[24] Crucially, the formulation of sound policy alone is insufficient to produce meaningful outcomes; effective implementation is the stage at which policy objectives are translated into tangible impacts experienced by real communities in real conditions.

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[19]Tamba, D., & Kholikin, R. A. (2025). Media Sosial dalam Membangun Opini Publik atas Layanan Pemerintah: Kajian Literatur Interaksi Sosial Digital. *Jejaring Administrasi Publik*, 17(2), 113–126. https://doi.org/10.20473/jap.v17i2.79710

[20]Amir, A. S., et al. (2024). *Peran Media Sosial dalam Pembentukan Opini Publik*. NAS Media Pustaka.

[21]Koestiono, F., Hapsari, A. P., Permadi, R., Muchlis, M., & Metalia, D. (2025). Pengaruh Media Sosial terhadap Pembentukan Opini Publik tentang Hukum. *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Humaniora*, 6(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.53697/iso.v6i1.3287

[22]Tamba, D., & Kholikin, R. A. (2025). *Op. cit.*

[23]Watie, E. D. S., Safira, C., & Suhariyanto, S. (2024). Pembentukan Opini Publik di Media Sosial pada Isu Pemaksaan Penggunaan Jilbab di Sekolah. *Janaloka: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 2(1), 131–144. https://doi.org/10.26623/janaloka.v2i1.9430

[24]Desrinelti, D., Afifah, M., & Gistituati, N. (2021). Kebijakan Publik: Konsep Pelaksanaan. *JRTI (Jurnal Riset Tindakan Indonesia)*, 6(1), 83–88. https://doi.org/10.29210/3003906000

The implementation of public policy involves a complex array of actors operating across central and local government levels, the private sector, and civil society. Maharaksa et al. identify three principal challenges that recurrently impede effective policy implementation: limited resources — both human and financial — misalignment between policy objectives and local needs and interests, and resistance from particular groups within the target community.[25] These challenges are especially pronounced in geographically remote or rural areas where logistical constraints compound administrative difficulties. The success of a policy in such contexts depends on adaptive management, multi-stakeholder coordination, and sustained monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that can identify problems and enable course corrections in real time.

In the specific domain of food and nutrition policy in Indonesia, several legal frameworks provide the normative foundation for government intervention. These include Article 28H(1) and Article 34(2–3) of the 1945 Constitution, which establish citizens' rights to health services and social welfare and the state's obligation to develop social security systems; Law No. 17 of 2023 on Health; Law No. 18 of 2012 on Food; Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System; and Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2024 on the National Nutrition Agency (*Badan Gizi Nasional*).[26] These instruments collectively affirm that the provision of adequate nutrition — particularly for children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers — is a constitutional and statutory responsibility of the Indonesian state, not merely a discretionary social program.

C. The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG)

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Program Makan Bergizi Gratis*, MBG) is one of the flagship social welfare policies of the Prabowo Subianto administration, formally launched on January 2, 2025. The program is designed to address Indonesia's persistent nutritional challenges, particularly the high prevalence of stunting — recorded at 21.5% in 2023 — and the substantial proportion of school-aged children who arrive at school without adequate nutrition.[27] The MBG Program targets school students, infants under five (*balita*), pregnant women, and nursing mothers, with the government allocating Rp71 trillion from the 2025 state budget and projecting coverage of up to 82.9 million beneficiaries at full implementation.[28] Institutionally, the program is administered by the National Nutrition Agency under Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025, which establishes the governance, oversight, evaluation, and procurement frameworks for its operation.

Research on the educational impacts of the MBG Program has yielded consistently positive findings. Seventilofa found that adequate nutritional intake provided through MBG contributes to improvements in students' learning concentration, attendance rates, and overall cognitive readiness — preconditions that are critical for academic achievement

[25]Maharaksa, M. S., Triharjono, H. D., Fadilah, F. N., Solihat, S. A. Z. K., Firda, S. M., & Hidayat, Z. A. (2025). Implementasi Kebijakan Publik: Pengertian, Model-model dan Penerapannya dalam Contoh Studi Kasus. *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara*, 1(6), 69–73.

[26]Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 83 Tahun 2024 tentang Badan Gizi Nasional; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 17 Tahun 2023 tentang Kesehatan; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2012 tentang Pangan; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional.

[27]Kiftiyah, A., Palestina, F. A., Abshar, F. U., & Rofiah, K. (2025). Program Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG) dalam Perspektif Keadilan Sosial dan Dinamika Sosial-Politik. *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, 5(1), 101–112.

[28]Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 115 Tahun 2025 tentang Tata Kelola Penyelenggaraan Program Makan Bergizi Gratis. Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia.

and long-term intellectual development.[29] Herniati and Idawati similarly documented that the program enhances student motivation, school attendance, and classroom participation, thereby creating more conducive educational environments at the school level.[30] Furkan et al. noted, however, that the program's benefits are unevenly distributed due to administrative and technical implementation challenges, including delays in food distribution, limited supporting facilities, and inadequate menu variety — challenges that are particularly acute in rural and geographically remote areas.[31]

Beyond its educational dimension, the MBG Program carries significant social and economic implications. Kiftiyah et al. frame the program within the discourse of social justice, arguing that it represents a concrete expression of the state's commitment to equitable development and to the fulfillment of citizens' basic social rights.[32] Economically, the program is expected to generate positive multiplier effects at the local level through supply chain linkages with local farmers, food producers, and MSMEs. However, Aziz et al. found that public perceptions of MBG are divided along lines of direct experience versus media-mediated narratives: communities with positive firsthand experiences of the program tend to hold favorable views, while those exposed primarily to politically charged social media narratives are more likely to express skepticism about the program's intentions and effectiveness.[33]

D. Islamic Community Development and Social Welfare

Islamic community development (*pengembangan masyarakat Islam*) constitutes the overarching conceptual framework within which this study situates its analysis of public opinion toward the MBG Program. This framework is grounded in the Qur'anic principle that the Muslim community (*ummah*) is collectively responsible for promoting good (*amar ma'ruf*) and preventing harm (*nahi munkar*), and that this responsibility extends to the social and material welfare of all members of society, especially the most vulnerable.[34] The concept of *maslahah 'ammah* (general public welfare) — one of the foundational principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) — holds that any action or policy that genuinely serves the collective good of the community is not only permissible but actively encouraged, provided it does not contravene Islamic ethical principles.[35]

In this light, a government program that ensures adequate nutrition for schoolchildren, pregnant mothers, and nursing mothers aligns directly with the Islamic obligation to protect human life (*hifzh al-nafs*) and intellect (*hifzh al-'aql*) — two of the five essential objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*). Chapra argues that an Islamic economic and social framework is fundamentally oriented toward the actualization of human dignity (*karamah insaniyyah*) and the reduction of deprivation, situating social welfare programs within a moral economy of collective responsibility rather than mere state charity.[36] From this perspective, Muslim communities' evaluations of programs such as MBG are not purely instrumental — they are also morally and theologically informed,

[29]Seventilofa, I. G. N. O. (2025). The Impact of MBG (Makanan Bergizi Gratis) Program Towards Student Intelligence in Indonesia. *PESOLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1(2), 85–91. https://doi.org/10.59896/pesolah.v1i2.576

[30]Herniati, N., & Idawati. (2025). Efektivitas Program Pemerintah MBG (Makan Bergizi Gratis) terhadap Minat Belajar Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan AURA*, 1–11.

[31]Furkan, et al. (2025). *Op. cit.*

[32]Kiftiyah, A., et al. (2025). *Op. cit.*

[33]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). *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik (JIAP)*, 11(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jiap.2025.011.02.8

[34]Q.S. Ali 'Imran [3]: 104. *(Al-Qur'an)*

[35]Chapra, M. U. (2001). *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective*. The Islamic Foundation.

[36]Chapra, M. U. (2001). *Ibid.*

shaped by deep-seated values of social solidarity (*ta'awun*), justice (*'adalah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) that characterize the Islamic social ethic.

The relevance of this framework for the present study lies in the fact that Sei Sentosa Village is situated within a Muslim-majority community in Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra — a region where Islamic social values are deeply embedded in community life. Public opinion toward the MBG Program in this context is therefore shaped not only by instrumental assessments of program quality and delivery but also by normative expectations about the state's role in promoting collective welfare. The present study responds to this call by examining how a Muslim village community articulates, justifies, and evaluates a major government social welfare program — thereby contributing to the growing body of empirical research on Islamic community development in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena as experienced by research subjects — including their behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions — in a holistic and contextually grounded manner. Data are presented in the form of descriptive verbal accounts generated within a naturalistic setting through the application of multiple relevant data collection methods.[37] The phenomenological approach was selected because it is specifically oriented toward exploring the subjective meanings, lived experiences, and interpretations that community members assign to the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in their daily lives. This approach enables the researcher to go beyond surface-level descriptions and engage with the depth of community experience — how residents feel about, make sense of, and evaluate the program as a concrete presence in their social and economic lives.[38]

The study was conducted in Sei Sentosa Village, Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. This location was selected because Sei Sentosa Village is one of the sites where the MBG Program has been actively implemented, making it a relevant and information-rich context for examining community public opinion. The fieldwork was carried out from March 26 to 28, 2026, during which the researcher engaged directly with informants and observed program activities in their natural setting.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that involves the deliberate selection of participants based on their knowledge, direct experience, and relevance to the research problem.[39] A total of seven informants participated in this study, representing multiple stakeholder groups involved in or affected by the MBG Program. The informants are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Research Informants.

No	Code	Position/Role
1	AK	Head of SPPG (*Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi*), Sei Sentosa Village
2	NL	Village Secretary, Sei Sentosa Village
3	DS	Teacher, SMA Karya Tani
4	AS	Parent of a student beneficiary
5	SS	Parent of a student beneficiary
6	ZS	Student, SMA Karya Tani
7	AS	Student, SMA Karya Tani

[37]Moleong, L. J. (2017). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Edisi Revisi). Remaja Rosdakarya.

[38]Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

[39]Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications. *(Edisi terjemahan: Pustaka Pelajar, 2014)*

The selection of two parents as informants was based on the rationale that they directly experience the household-level impact of the MBG Program — including its effects on children's nutritional intake, changes in household expenditure, and shifts in children's school behavior and energy levels. Parents are therefore positioned to provide comprehensive insights into how the program contributes to family welfare and economic relief, particularly for middle-to-lower income households.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide developed in accordance with the research objectives, with each interview lasting approximately 10 to 15 minutes and held in a location mutually agreed upon by the researcher and informant. The interview atmosphere was kept relaxed and informal to encourage open and candid responses. Observation was conducted directly at MBG Program activity sites to document program implementation processes, distribution mechanisms, and the nature of community involvement. Documentation was used to supplement and triangulate the data obtained through interviews and observation, drawing on activity photographs, field notes, and other supporting records.[40]

Data analysis followed the three-stage interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher reviewed, selected, and focused the raw data by identifying information directly relevant to the research questions. In the data display stage, the reduced data were organized into descriptive narrative form to facilitate pattern recognition and analytical interpretation. In the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher formulated preliminary findings and verified them through ongoing cross-checking with the data corpus, ensuring that interpretive claims were grounded in empirical evidence.[41]

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, the study employed source triangulation by cross-referencing information obtained from the three informant groups — program administrators, village officials, teachers, parents, and students — to identify consistencies and divergences across perspectives. Method triangulation was also applied by comparing the findings from interviews, field observation, and documentation to assess the internal consistency of the data.[42] These validation procedures are consistent with the standards of rigorous qualitative inquiry as articulated by Creswell, who emphasizes that credibility in qualitative research depends on systematic data collection, reflexive analysis, and multi-source corroboration of interpretive claims.[43]

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This section presents the research findings based on in-depth interviews conducted with seven informants in Sei Sentosa Village, Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency, from March 26 to 28, 2026. The findings are organized according to each informant's perspective on the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), covering its perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and community expectations.

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[40]Creswell, J. W. (1994). *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. SAGE Publications.

[41]Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

[42]Sugiyono. (2019). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Alfabeta.

[43]Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Op. cit.*

1. Informant I — Head of SPPG, Sei Sentosa Village (AK)

Based on the interview with AK as the Head of the *Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi* (SPPG) of Sei Sentosa Village, the MBG Program is considered to have delivered significant benefits to the community, particularly for vulnerable groups including students, infants under five (*balita*), pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly, and low-income households. The program is assessed as an effective form of social intervention because it directly addresses the community's most basic need: access to adequate nutrition and food. According to AK, the program's benefits are felt concretely by the community, as it supports their daily nutritional consumption needs and reduces household expenditure.

> *"The MBG Program is a very positive step and has brought great benefits to the community. It has shown real impact in improving nutritional quality, particularly for infants, pregnant women, and the elderly. With this program, people find it easier to access quality nutritious food, which helps reduce the risk of malnutrition and improve overall health."*

> *"Although the program is running well, we still face several challenges, including limited human resources, logistical and distribution constraints, and the need to improve the quality and variety of food menus provided. These are areas we are continuously working to improve."*

> *"I hope this program can continue and be improved in quality. With the support of various parties – government, private sector, and the community – I believe it can develop further and reach more beneficiaries. This program is not merely about providing food; it is a strategic effort to improve the overall welfare and health of the community."*

Regarding implementation, AK explained that the MBG Program operates through a systematic sequence of stages: registration of beneficiaries, food preparation, distribution to designated delivery points, food distribution to recipients, and program evaluation. Each stage is carried out in an organized manner to ensure the program operates effectively, efficiently, and reaches its intended targets.

Despite its generally positive reception, implementation challenges were identified, particularly around the delayed delivery of raw materials — especially fruits that must be sourced from distant areas such as Berastagi — which sometimes results in shortages at the time of preparation. The geographic remoteness of the village also poses a challenge, as access to quality raw ingredients is limited and prices tend to be higher.



Figure 1. Head of SPPG, Sei Sentosa Village.

2. Informant II — Village Secretary, Sei Sentosa Village (NL)

Based on the interview with NL as the Village Secretary, the MBG Program is viewed as a strategic policy with a significant role in improving community welfare, especially for vulnerable groups such as infants, pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly, and economically disadvantaged households. The program is regarded as an effective social intervention because it directly addresses the community's fundamental needs.

> *"As Village Secretary of Sei Sentosa, I greatly appreciate the implementation of this Free Nutritious Meal Program. It is a strategic step in improving the quality of life of the community, particularly for vulnerable groups such as infants, pregnant women, the elderly, and the underprivileged."*
>
> *"From the village government's perspective, this program has had a fairly significant impact, both socially and economically. The community feels helped because the financial burden of meeting nutritional needs has been reduced. In addition, community health and nutritional intake have also improved."*
>
> *"Some challenges that remain include budget limitations, limited program staff, and several community complaints regarding the food distribution schedule and food quality that still needs improvement."*

NL further noted that community response to the program is generally positive, with many parents expressing appreciation for their children receiving nutritious meals without additional daily costs. Observable changes were also noted, such as improved school attendance and increased student alertness during learning activities. Nevertheless, critical feedback from some residents identified delayed distribution schedules, limited menu variety, and uneven coverage as areas requiring attention. NL expressed hope that the program would continue with greater regularity, improved targeting, and enhanced food quality over time.





Figure 2. Village Secretary, Sei Sentosa Village.

3. Informant III — Teacher, SMA Karya Tani (DS)

Based on the interview with DS as a teacher at SMA Karya Tani, the MBG Program is assessed as having a significantly positive impact on students' physical condition and their

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readiness for learning. The program is considered effective in supporting students' nutritional needs, which in turn directly influences their learning motivation, school attendance, and concentration during classroom activities.

> *"This Free Nutritious Meal Program has had a very positive impact on students. I have seen improvements in students' nutritional quality and health since the program began."*

> *"Yes, the program has had a major effect on the learning process. Students are more enthusiastic about coming to school because they receive nutritious food every day. Furthermore, their improved physical condition has made them more focused and prepared for teaching and learning activities."*

> *"Student responses to the MBG Program are generally positive. They are happy and enthusiastic. On the downside, the menu is sometimes not suitable – the portions are sometimes inconsistent, and the food can be too salty or bland. They are happy to receive food at school and not have to endure hunger while studying. Many students have also become more motivated and focused in class."*

> *"The challenges that frequently arise include delays in food distribution, limited menu variety, and portions that are sometimes insufficient. The distribution process can also sometimes be disorderly."*

DS expressed hope that the program would continue as a strategic policy supporting student welfare and education, but noted that implementation must be continuously evaluated and improved — particularly with regard to distribution regularity, food quality, and menu diversity.



Figure 3. Teacher, SMA Karya Tani.

4. Informant IV — Parent of Student Beneficiary (AS)

Based on the interview with AS as a parent and guardian of a student at SMA Karya Tani, the MBG Program is assessed as providing significant positive benefits for the family, particularly in terms of household economics.

> *"As a parent and guardian at SMA Karya Tani, I greatly appreciate this Free Nutritious Meal Program. It is very helpful, especially for those of us with economic limitations."*

"The benefits I feel are considerable, especially in reducing the family's financial burden. Our children receive healthy and nutritious food, so we no longer need to provide additional money for their lunch – whether at school or at home. I also feel more at ease knowing that my child's nutritional needs are being adequately met."

"I hope this program can continue on a sustained basis. I also hope there will be improvements in schedule regularity, food quality, and menu variety so that children do not become bored."

"The benefits my child experiences are that they no longer feel hungry during lessons, they are more enthusiastic about going to school, and they appear more active than before."

AS confirmed that the program warrants continuation, as it provides meaningful support for children's nutritional needs and meaningfully reduces the burden on parents. The informant also recommended improvements in distribution schedules, food quality, and menu variation to optimize the program's impact.



Figure 4. Parent of Student Beneficiary.

5. Informant V – Parent of Student Beneficiary (SS)

Based on the interview with SS as a parent of a student, the MBG Program is viewed as delivering positive benefits for the family, particularly in ensuring that children receive adequate food intake during school hours.

"As a parent, I am very pleased with this program because it greatly helps us, especially in meeting children's food needs at school."

"The benefits are considerable – it reduces spending on children's pocket money, and I feel more at ease knowing my child has already received food at school. So it has helped me in managing household needs as well."

"According to me, it is already quite good, but sometimes my child says the menu is still not varied enough and the taste is sometimes not to their liking."

"Yes, it has had an effect. My child is more enthusiastic about going to school and does not often buy unhealthy snacks."

"The constraint is not too significant – it is mainly just about the menu variety, which could be expanded so that children do not get bored."

"I hope this program can continue, and in the future the food will be more varied and its taste better adjusted to children's preferences."

6. Informant VI – Student, SMA Karya Tani (ZS)

Based on the interview with ZS as a student beneficiary, the MBG Program is assessed as being very beneficial for school life, both in meeting food needs and in improving learning quality.

"In my opinion, this program is very good and helpful for us as students. With this program, we no longer need to bring food from home and can still get healthy meals at school."

"The benefit I feel is that I no longer get hungry easily during lessons, so I can be more focused in following the lessons in class. I also feel more energetic in carrying out school activities."

"I hope the food menu can be more varied and the taste further improved, so that students do not feel bored."

"In my opinion, it is already quite good; the distribution runs smoothly, although there are sometimes slight delays."

"The food is tasty and filling enough, but sometimes the menu is repetitive, so it gets a bit boring."

"I hope this program can continue to be implemented because it is beneficial for us. Hopefully the food will be more complete and more nutritious in the future."



Figure 5. Student, SMA Karya Tani.

7. Informant VII – Student, SMA Karya Tani (AS)

Based on the interview with AS as a student beneficiary, the MBG Program is considered to have a very positive impact on school life, particularly in meeting food needs during school hours and improving learning readiness.

"I feel happy about this Free Nutritious Meal Program because it greatly helps us in meeting our food needs while at school."

"Yes, this program has had a major influence. I have become more enthusiastic about studying, I do not get tired as easily, and I am more prepared to follow lessons in class."

"I hope this program can continue and be improved, especially in terms of menu variety and food quality so that it keeps getting better."

"The constraints are that sometimes the food arrives late, and sometimes the fruit is already overripe."

"In my opinion, it is already quite good, but it still needs improvement in menu variety so we do not get bored, and the portions could be slightly increased."



Figure 6. Student, SMA Karya Tani.

B. Discussion

Based on research findings obtained through interviews with all seven informants in Sei Sentosa Village, the MBG Program demonstrates a form of public policy implementation that has broadly succeeded in delivering positive social impact. These findings can be analyzed through three intersecting theoretical lenses: public opinion theory, public policy theory, and the framework of Islamic community development.

1. Public Opinion Dimension

According to public opinion theory, public opinion constitutes the aggregate of views, attitudes, and perceptions held by members of a community regarding an issue of shared concern.[44] Cutlip further explains that public opinion is formed through the collective response of society to specific policies or social issues.[45] In the context of this study, the majority of the Sei Sentosa community expressed positive public opinion toward the MBG Program because its benefits are experienced directly in daily life — the program

[44]Setiadarma, A. (2021). Kaitan *Public Opinion* dan *Public Relations*. *IKON: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Komunikasi*, 26(3), 214–222.

[45]Juariyah. (2019). *Opini Publik dan Propaganda*. LPPM Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember.

is assessed as contributing to nutritional fulfillment, improving community health, reducing household economic burdens, and supporting students' learning activities. This finding is notable in contrast to the study of Aziz et al., which identified significant skepticism toward MBG among communities exposed primarily to negative social media narratives.[46] In Sei Sentosa, opinion formation was driven predominantly by direct experiential knowledge rather than mediated information, suggesting that program quality and local reach are critical determinants of public trust.

2. Public Policy Dimension

From a public policy perspective, the MBG Program represents a concrete form of government intervention aimed at addressing nutritional deficiencies and improving social welfare. As Desrinelti et al. affirm, public policy consists of a set of government decisions and actions oriented toward meeting community needs and resolving social problems.[47] The MBG Program in Sei Sentosa reflects a policy implementation process that is systematically structured — encompassing beneficiary registration, food preparation, distribution, delivery, and evaluation — demonstrating the commitment of both the village government and program administrators to organized and accountable service delivery. However, as Maharaksa et al. emphasize, the success of policy implementation depends substantially on resource adequacy, distribution effectiveness, and the capacity to overcome technical obstacles in the field.[48] The findings of this study confirm that while the program's objectives are being meaningfully achieved, technical implementation gaps — including distribution delays, food quality inconsistencies, and limited menu variety — continue to constrain its optimal effectiveness. These findings align with those of Furkan et al., who similarly documented administrative and technical challenges in MBG implementation across multiple regions.[49]

3. Educational and Economic Dimension

Across all informant groups, the MBG Program was found to produce significant educational and economic co-benefits. Students reported improvements in concentration, energy levels, and learning motivation — consistent with the findings of Seventilofa, who documented positive MBG impacts on student cognitive readiness.[50] Parents reported a measurable reduction in household food expenditure and expressed greater peace of mind regarding their children's daily nutritional intake — benefits that are particularly meaningful for middle-to-lower income families. Teachers confirmed improvements in student attendance, classroom participation, and overall academic engagement. Taken together, these multi-dimensional impacts demonstrate that the MBG Program functions not only as a food security intervention but as a broader instrument of social development contributing to human capital formation.

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[46]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). *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik (JIAP)*, 11(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jiap.2025.011.02.8

[47]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). *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Publik (JIAP)*, 11(2), 215–228. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jiap.2025.011.02.8

[48]Maharaksa, M. S., et al. (2025). Implementasi Kebijakan Publik: Pengertian, Model-model dan Penerapannya dalam Contoh Studi Kasus. *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara*, 1(6), 69–73.

[49]Furkan, et al. (2025).

[50]Seventilofa, I. G. N. O. (2025). The Impact of MBG (Makanan Bergizi Gratis) Program Towards Student Intelligence in Indonesia. *PESOLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Humaniora*, 1(2), 85–91. https://doi.org/10.59896/pesolah.v1i2.576

4. Islamic Community Development Dimension

From the perspective of Islamic community development, the MBG Program's alignment with the principles of *maslahah 'ammah* (general public welfare) and *karamah insaniyyah* (human dignity) is evident in how the Sei Sentosa community evaluates its social value.[51] The community perceives the program not merely as a form of state charity but as a legitimate expression of the government's moral obligation to ensure the welfare of all citizens — particularly the most vulnerable. This normative framing of the program — as a matter of social justice and collective responsibility — is deeply consonant with Islamic social ethics, wherein the fulfillment of basic needs is understood as a religious and communal duty, not merely a bureaucratic function. The constructive criticism voiced by community members regarding implementation quality further reflects the Islamic principle of *amr bi al-ma'ruf* — an active commitment to calling for what is good — functioning as a form of participatory social control that can strengthen the program's long-term effectiveness and legitimacy.

Overall, the research findings demonstrate that the MBG Program in Sei Sentosa Village has successfully built positive public opinion because its social, economic, health, and educational benefits are perceived by the community as substantially outweighing its implementation shortcomings. The program has achieved meaningful social legitimacy, creating a foundation for sustained community support. However, to maintain and deepen this legitimacy, continuous improvements in distribution quality, menu diversity, delivery timeliness, and resource capacity are essential — ensuring that the program evolves into a durable and optimally effective instrument of community welfare and Islamic social development.

CONCLUSION

This study examined public opinion within the Muslim community of Sei Sentosa Village, Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency, toward the Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Program Makan Bergizi Gratis*/MBG) as a government social welfare policy. Based on in-depth interviews with seven informants representing multiple stakeholder groups — program administrators, village officials, teachers, parents, and student beneficiaries — the study concludes that public opinion toward the MBG Program is broadly positive. The program is perceived as a meaningful and beneficial social welfare policy that responds concretely to the community's basic needs, particularly in the areas of nutrition, health, and education.

The findings reveal three principal dimensions of program impact. First, from a nutritional and health perspective, the MBG Program has improved community members' access to adequate and regular nutrition, particularly for vulnerable groups including students, infants, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and elderly residents. Second, from an educational perspective, the program has contributed to improvements in student learning motivation, school attendance, classroom concentration, and overall academic readiness — reflecting the direct link between nutritional fulfillment and cognitive performance. Third, from a socio-economic perspective, the program has reduced household food expenditure, providing tangible economic relief for middle-to-lower income families and enabling parents to redirect limited resources toward other essential needs.

Public opinion in Sei Sentosa Village is primarily shaped by direct lived experience with the program rather than by media-mediated narratives, which distinguishes this

[51]Chapra, M. U. (2001). *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective*. The Islamic Foundation.

community's response from more skeptical reactions documented in previous studies. This pattern indicates that when a social welfare program reaches its target beneficiaries effectively and delivers tangible benefits, it generates strong social legitimacy and community trust — two preconditions for the program's long-term sustainability. The constructive criticism voiced by community members regarding distribution delays, limited menu variety, inconsistent food quality, and uneven program coverage reflects an active and engaged citizenry functioning as social monitors of public policy — a dynamic that is both democratically valuable and consistent with the Islamic principle of *amr bi al-ma'ruf* (enjoining what is good).

Situated within the framework of Islamic community development, the MBG Program's contribution to the fulfillment of basic human needs aligns with the foundational Islamic principles of *maslahah 'ammah* (general public welfare), *karamah insaniyyah* (human dignity), and *hifzh al-nafs* and *hifzh al-'aql* (the protection of life and intellect) — two of the five essential objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*). The community's positive reception of the program as an expression of social justice and state responsibility further affirms its resonance with Islamic social ethics. This dimension underscores the relevance of this study to the field of Islamic community development and social welfare scholarship, particularly in Muslim-majority rural contexts in Indonesia.

Despite the program's overall positive reception, this study identifies several implementation challenges that require sustained attention. These include delays in food distribution caused partly by geographic remoteness and dependency on supply chains from distant areas, limited menu variety leading to diminishing recipient enthusiasm over time, inconsistency in food quality and portion sizes, and uneven distribution coverage across all eligible beneficiaries. These challenges reflect the broader structural and logistical difficulties inherent in implementing large-scale social programs in rural and geographically constrained settings.

Accordingly, this study offers the following recommendations. At the operational level, program administrators should improve supply chain management, diversify menu options to reflect local food preferences and nutritional standards, establish more consistent distribution schedules, and strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. At the policy level, village governments and regional authorities should integrate the MBG Program into local social welfare planning frameworks, ensure adequate budget allocation, and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships — including with the private sector and civil society — to support program continuity and scalability. At the community level, enhanced socialization and communication regarding the program's objectives, implementation processes, and long-term vision are needed to deepen public understanding and sustain community engagement.

This study acknowledges certain limitations. The research was conducted within a single village over a short fieldwork period, and the relatively small number of informants limits the generalizability of the findings to other coastal or rural communities in Indonesia. Future research is recommended to employ a broader geographic scope, a larger and more diverse informant pool, longitudinal methods to track opinion change over time, and quantitative measures — such as changes in nutritional indicators, school attendance rates, and household expenditure patterns — to complement the qualitative findings of this study. Comparative research across multiple communities with varying socioeconomic and geographic profiles would also enrich the scholarly understanding of how community-based public opinion shapes the governance and sustainability of social welfare programs in Indonesia.

In conclusion, the MBG Program represents a significant and potentially transformative instrument of social welfare and Islamic community development at the

village level. Its success in building positive public opinion and delivering multi-dimensional community benefits demonstrates the value of targeted, community-responsive social policy. With sustained commitment to quality improvement, equitable distribution, and participatory governance, the MBG Program has the potential to become an enduring model of state-led community empowerment grounded in values of social justice, human dignity, and collective welfare.

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