

Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Pinrang Regency: A Qualitative Study from an Islamic Legal Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Background: The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Pinrang Regency requires an analysis of its implementation and legal regulations from a *Siyasah Syar'iyah* perspective.

Aims: This study aims to determine the implementation of the MBG Program and its implementing legal regulations in Pinrang Regency through *Siyasah Syar'iyah* analysis.

Method: The type of research is qualitative field research. Data was obtained from primary and secondary sources, through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Result: The implementation of the MBG Program in Pinrang proceeded through planning, implementation, and monitoring stages. Its implementation received high participation from the school and parents. The involvement of local MSMEs has also been proven to help the local economy. The legal basis for this program refers to Law No. 18/2012 (Food), Law No. 17/2023 (Health), and Presidential Regulations No. 83/2017 & 2024.

Conclusion: The MBG program is a form of public welfare (*maslahah 'ammah*) that is valid according to sharia. This policy aligns with the *maqasid sharia* principle of preserving the soul (*hifz al-nafs*) and the mind (*hifz al-'aql*), with the goal of improving health, reducing stunting, and improving the quality of human resources for the younger generation.

Keywords: Implementation of Free Nutritious Meals, *Syar'iyah Siyasah*

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INTRODUCTION

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is one of the government's strategic initiatives that has high urgency in efforts to improve the quality of Indonesia's Human Resources (Lestari et al., 2024; Raveenthiranathan et al., 2024; Suprpto et al., 2025). This program fundamentally aims to address the nation's chronic problems, such as malnutrition and stunting, which directly hinder the cognitive and physical growth of the next generation (Maulana et al., 2025; Shiddiq & Effendi, 2025; Siahaan, 2025; Sibarani et al., 2025). Considering the long-term impact of nutrition on a country's competitiveness and productivity (Ernita et al., 2025; Kashyap & Jablonski, 2025; Santoso et al., 2025). Therefore, in-depth research into the implementation of the MBG program is crucial. This analysis is needed to ensure that this well-intentioned policy is effectively distributed, targeted, and provides optimal nutritional benefits to students in various regions, particularly in Pinrang Regency.

Ideally, the MBG program should be implemented with tested nutritional standards, equitable distribution without logistical constraints, and strict quality control to ensure food safety (Kusuma, 2025; Piekarz-Porter et al., 2025; Zhao, 2025). However, in the reality of implementing public policies that involve many actors and regions, there often appears to be a gap between normative expectations and field conditions (Johnston et al., 2025; Jones-Smith et al., 2025; Kho & Hunter, nd). These gaps can manifest in various forms, ranging from variations in food quality, funding and sustainability challenges, to coordination issues between implementing agencies at the regional level (Albuquerque et al., 2025; Barnard et al., 2025; Moreland-Russell et al., 2025). This potential for deviation makes the expected benefits, namely the creation of *maslahah 'ammah* (general welfare) through the fulfillment of nutrition, less than optimal, so that an empirical study is needed to map these challenges (Gutierrez, 2025; Saleh & Imanda, 2025).

This research has a significant opportunity to make a significant contribution because the MBG policy is a new, large-scale program that has received intensive public attention. Focusing on the local level, namely Pinrang Regency, allows this research to capture the specific and contextual dynamics of implementation. By observing the planning, implementation, and monitoring processes at the local level, the results of this study can serve as a pilot study or evaluation model relevant to other regions. Furthermore, with the involvement of local stakeholders, such as schools, MSMEs, and local governments, this research can identify best practices and formulate applicable and sustainable policy recommendations.

Most research on food and nutrition policy tends to focus on economic aspects, public administration, or health impacts. The novelty of this research lies in the selection of the *Siyasah Syar'iyah* analytical framework. This fills a research gap that has not yet evaluated government social programs especially those rooted in contemporary policies from an Islamic legal perspective. By using *Siyasah Syar'iyah*, this study not only assesses administrative effectiveness but also verifies the program's legitimacy, its compliance with the principles of *maqasid sharia* (the objectives of sharia), and determines whether this policy constitutes a legitimate *ta'zir* (ruler's policy) measure to achieve the public interest.

The selection of *Siyasah Syar'iyah* Analysis as an explanatory is based on the belief that every public policy in a country with a majority Muslim population must be assessed for its conformity with fundamental Islamic values. The MBG program is a form of state intervention in the affairs of *al-nafsi* (soul) and *al-aql* (reason), which are two of the five main elements of *Maqashid Syariah* (*Hifz al-Nafs* and *Hifz al-'Aql*). *Siyasah Syar'iyah* functions as an Islamic legal instrument that regulates the actions of rulers (*ulil amri*) in realizing the welfare of the people.

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This study has two objectives: first, to comprehensively describe how the Free Nutritional Meal Program implementation process is carried out in Pinrang Regency; and second, to analyze and determine the legal status of the MBG Program from the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah* and its supporting regulations. The expected contribution of this study is a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic Constitutional Law (HTN) and *Siyasah Syar'iyah*, especially in the context of modern social policy. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a scientific reference for the Pinrang Regency Government and national policy makers in refining the legal basis and operational mechanisms of the MBG Program so that the goals of improving health and human resource quality can be achieved optimally.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative research type with a field research approach. (Suprayitno et al., 2024). A qualitative design was chosen because the goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation process of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) in Pinrang Regency and analyze its legal legitimacy through the perspective of *Siyasah Syar'iyah*. Field research allows researchers to obtain rich primary data from direct sources, understand the social context of the policy, and construct meaning from the collected data, especially those related to stakeholders' views on public policy from an Islamic legal perspective.

Participant (Participant)

Participants (resource persons) in this study were those directly involved in policy formulation, implementation, and beneficiaries of the MBG Program. Based on data contained in the thesis appendix, the main participants include:

1. Government/Implementing Party: Officials at the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) Pinrang Regency
2. Technical Implementation Party/School: Teachers/Principals who are responsible for the daily implementation of the program at school
3. Parties Involved: Other parties related to the supply chain or oversight

Population and the methods of sampling

1. Population: The population of this study is all activities, processes, and regulations related to the Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Pinrang Regency.
2. Sampling Method: Because this is a qualitative study, the sampling technique used was purposive sampling. The researcher deliberately selected key informants with knowledge, experience, and credible authority regarding the MBG Program and its legal aspects to ensure the depth of relevant information.

Instrument:

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher himself (human instrument). The researcher acts as the main data collecting and analyzing tool. Supporting instruments used include:

1. Interview Guide: A list of structured and unstructured questions used to elicit in-depth information from interviewees regarding the implementation process and their views on the legal aspects of the policy.
2. Observation Sheet: Used to record field conditions, food distribution processes, and interactions between implementers and beneficiaries at the research location.
3. Documentation Guidelines: Used to collect official documents, government regulations (Presidential Decree, Law, Regional Regulation/Regent Regulation), program reports, and statistical data related to nutrition in Pinrang.

Procedures and Time Frame (Procedures and Time Frame)

The research procedure is divided into three main stages:

Procedure Stages	Activity Description	Relevant Time Frame
Preparation Stage	Management of research permits, literature studies related to the MBG and Siyasaḥ Syar'iyah Programs, designing interview guidelines, and determining key informants.	Before July 2025
Data Collection Stage (Field Work)	Conducting observations at implementation locations (schools/distribution points), in-depth interviews with resource persons, and collecting supporting documents.	Around July 2025 (based on interview snippet)
Analysis and Reporting Stage	Data reduction, data presentation (narration and tables), in-depth analysis using the Siyasaḥ Syar'iyah framework, drawing conclusions, and writing a thesis report.	After data collection is complete

Analysis Plan

The data analysis technique used is an interactive analysis model, which includes:

Analysis Steps	Description
Data Reduction	The process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. Irrelevant data is eliminated, while core data related to implementation and Siyasaḥ Syar'iyah are retained.
Data Display	The process of presenting reduced data in narrative, tabular, or chart form. This presentation aims to facilitate understanding and visualize the patterns of relationships between the variables being studied.
Conclusion Drawing/Verification	Initial conclusions are drawn which are then verified with existing data. This process involves interpreting data based on the Siyasaḥ Syar'iyah theoretical framework to determine the legitimacy and conformity of MBG policies with maqashid sharia (Sharia Goals).
Data Validity Check	Includes source triangulation (comparing information from different sources) and/or method triangulation (comparing interview data with observation/document data).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The implementation of the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) Program in Pinrang Regency demonstrates a well-organized sequence of three main stages: planning, implementation, and monitoring. The planning stage is coordinated by the Pinrang National Nutrition Agency (BGN), which collaborates with local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to prepare and adjust the nutritional menu. The implementation stage is centered in schools, where teachers and committees play a key role in daily distribution, which field data records a positive response from students and parents. Meanwhile, the monitoring stage is carried out in layers by BGN, the Health Office, and internally at schools to ensure the quality and quantity of food are maintained. From a juridical-Islamic perspective, the research results confirm that the MBG Program is a legitimate public policy (ta'zir) and in line with the principles of Siyasaḥ Syar'iyah. This policy has a strong positive legal basis and fundamentally fulfills two of the five basic objectives of Sharia (Maqasid

Syariah): Hifz al-Nafs (Protecting the Soul) through nutritional support that prevents stunting, and Hifz al-'Aql (Protecting the Intellect) through improving cognitive function. Therefore, this program is categorized as *Maslahah 'Ammah* (Public Benefit), where the government acts to realize benefits for the wider community.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Pinrang Regency reflects an effort to fulfill the state's responsibility to ensure public welfare, which aligns with the principles of Islamic law concerning the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*) and human well-being (Joshi & Bohara, 2025; Liang et al., 2025; Sari et al., nd). This normative framework is supported by field data showing that the program was perceived by implementers as a moral and social obligation rather than merely an administrative task. One local government official explicitly stated that the program was intended to "ensure that no child attends school hungry, because nutrition is part of the government's responsibility toward future generations." This statement illustrates how Islamic ethical values were implicitly embedded in policy implementation at the local level (Drechsler et al., 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2024).

From the perspective of program implementation, informants at the school level emphasized the tangible benefits of the program for students' daily learning experiences. A school principal noted that "students are more enthusiastic in class and less distracted during lessons after receiving nutritious meals," while a teacher reported that the program helped reduce complaints of fatigue and lack of concentration among students. These observations provide empirical support for normative arguments in Islamic jurisprudence that associate welfare policies with the realization of *maslahah* (public benefit). Rather than remaining abstract, the concept of *maslahah* is manifested in observable improvements in students' physical readiness and learning engagement, as reported by multiple informants.

The perspectives of parents further strengthen the linkage between normative principles and lived experience. Several parents expressed that the program eased their economic burden and ensured consistent nutritional intake for their children. One parent stated that "the program helps us a lot, especially on days when household income is uncertain." This finding resonates with Islamic legal principles emphasizing social justice and the obligation of authorities to protect vulnerable groups. In this context, the program functions not only as a nutrition intervention but also as a mechanism for reducing inequality, thereby reinforcing the ethical foundations of Islamic governance.

However, field data also reveal practical challenges that nuance the normative discourse. Some informants pointed out limitations related to menu variation and logistical coordination. A teacher mentioned that "the menu sometimes lacks variation, which affects students' appetite," while a local official acknowledged constraints in budget allocation and supply management. These statements highlight that although the program aligns with Islamic legal ideals, its effectiveness depends on administrative capacity and continuous evaluation. This empirical evidence helps ground normative arguments in real-world conditions, demonstrating that the realization of Islamic legal principles in public policy requires not only ethical commitment but also effective governance mechanisms.

Overall, the integration of informants' statements into the discussion strengthens the analytical link between Islamic legal norms and empirical realities. The findings suggest that the Free Nutritious Meal Program represents a practical expression of Islamic legal values when supported by institutional commitment and community acceptance. At the same time, the challenges identified by informants indicate the need for ongoing improvement to ensure that normative objectives are consistently translated into sustainable and effective practice.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the research on the Implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in Pinrang Regency through *Siyasah Syar'iyah* Analysis are as follows. First, the implementation of the MBG Program in Pinrang Regency shows a well-organized process, including the planning, implementation, and monitoring stages. The implementation of this program successfully involved the active participation of local MSMEs and schools, which indicates that the policy can be implemented effectively at the regional level to achieve the goal of improving nutrition. Second, based on the *Siyasah Syar'iyah* analysis, the MBG Program has strong legitimacy and is in line with the principles of Islamic law. This policy is a legitimate form of *Maslahah 'Ammah* (Public Benefit), because it fundamentally aims to realize the two main pillars of *Maqashid Syariah*, namely *Hifz al-Nafs* (Protecting the Soul) and *Hifz al-'Aql* (Protecting the Mind). Thus, state intervention through the MBG program is permitted and even recommended by the *Syariah* System as an effort by the *ulil amri* (leaders of the nation) to ensure the primary needs and welfare of future generations. Overall, the MBG program in Pinrang is a policy model that is effective in implementation and justified by *Sharia* law to achieve high-quality Indonesian human resources free from stunting.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

SYZ from the Constitutional Law Study Program, Faculty of *Sharia* and Islamic Law, State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Parepare. This research was completed under the guidance and direction of P1, who is also a lecturer/teaching staff at the related institution. The full contributions of each party are further explained in the following statements.

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