

Comprehensive Study of Mass Poisoning MBG Program (Legal, Health, Human Rights, Social Perspectives)

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ABSTRACT

The Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program is a strategic government policy to improve the quality of human resources, but its implementation faces serious technical risks due to its inclusion in mass poisoning incidents. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the phenomenon of mass poisoning in the MBG program through four main perspectives: law, health, human rights (HAM), and social. Using a normative-empirical research method with a case study approach, this study explores systemic failures in the food supply chain. The results of the study indicate that mass poisoning is not merely a medical problem, but rather a representation of weak enforcement of food safety regulations, violations of the basic right to safe food, and triggers social distrust in state institutions. This study recommends strengthening food safety protocols, standardizing food supply units, and establishing clear legal accountability mechanisms to protect citizens as rights holders.

Keywords: Free Nutritious Meals, Mass Poisoning, Food Safety, Human Rights, Legal Responsibility

Introduction

Food safety is a fundamental pillar of any national-scale nutrition intervention program, particularly the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program, which targets vulnerable populations such as schoolchildren. From a public health perspective, nutrition programs without strict sanitation oversight may backfire. The phenomenon of mass poisoning that occurs in government programs is often rooted in a lack of understanding of *Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points* (HACCP) among caterers. Therefore, ensuring that every meal provided is free from biological, chemical, and physical contamination is an absolute obligation of state administrators (Adams & Moss, 2022).

Sociologically, the MBG program has a noble goal of creating equal access to nutrition, but its integrity depends heavily on parents' trust. Mass food poisoning incidents create psychological trauma and widespread social resistance, potentially undermining the program's long-term goal of reducing stunting rates. The government's inability to ensure food safety in educational institutions reflects a failure of cross-sector coordination in non-natural disaster risk management. Therefore, mass food poisoning should be seen as a crisis of communication and trust between the government and the public (Slovic, 2016).

From a medical and health perspective, mass poisoning in MBG programs is generally caused by contamination with pathogenic bacteria such as *Salmonella*, *Escherichia coli*, or *Staphylococcus aureus*, which multiply when food is improperly handled and stored at unsafe temperatures. Processing large quantities of food for thousands of students requires meticulous industrial kitchen management, where a distribution delay of more than four hours without proper refrigeration can trigger the growth of toxins.

Failure to maintain the cold chain *or* the hygiene of processing personnel is a major determining factor in the occurrence of food poisoning outbreaks in school environments (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

The health impacts of this poisoning are not only acute, such as dehydration or digestive disorders, but can also have long-term effects on children's cognitive development if it occurs repeatedly. In the short term, medical costs arising from mass poisoning create an additional burden on the national health insurance system. Therefore, strengthening oversight by the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) and the Health Service at every point in food production is a non-negotiable technical necessity (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

A legal review shows that mass poisoning incidents constitute violations of the Consumer Protection Act and the Food Act. Civilly, catering providers or government-appointed vendors are held strictly liable *for* losses suffered by consumers due to unsafe products. Criminally, negligence resulting in illness or death can result in imprisonment, which aims to deter program implementers from ignoring food safety standard operating procedures (SOPs) (Marzuki, 2021).

Legal issues become more complex when bureaucratic accountability is involved, given that the MBG program is a state program funded by the state budget. There is a need to formulate a strict cooperation agreement between the government and third parties, explicitly stating provisions on food safety and victim compensation. The absence of clear regulations regarding compensation mechanisms for student victims of food poisoning indicates a persistent gap in legal protection for beneficiaries of public policies in Indonesia (Asshiddiqie, 2019).

Within the framework of human rights, food is the most fundamental human right, and the "right to food" includes the right to access safe and nutritious food. Mass poisoning in the MBG program can be categorized as a violation of the right to health and the right to a decent life guaranteed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). States have an obligation to protect *their* citizens from health problems caused by third parties (vendors) carrying out public functions (United Nations, 2018). Failure to prevent mass poisoning also touches on aspects of children's rights, where the state should provide special protection for their growth and development. When children are exposed to contaminated food at school, their right to a safe educational environment is compromised. Therefore, the human rights approach demands accountability and transparency at every stage of MBG implementation, so that citizens have access to justice if their basic rights are violated (Haryatmoko, 2021).

Social analysis of the mass poisoning phenomenon reveals complex dynamics of risk perception within the community. Issues of food poisoning on social media often experience amplification of risks, triggering mass panic, despite the available medical evidence. The public tends to associate poisoning with the low moral integrity of program organizers, which then transforms into narratives about corruption or budget inefficiencies that compromise food quality. This demonstrates that mass poisoning is a social phenomenon that can undermine social capital and community cohesion at the local level (Beck, 2022). Furthermore, this incident widened the gap of distrust in government programs, especially in areas with limited access to information. Parents' fear of allowing their children to consume school meals can lead to low program participation, ultimately wasting state funds. Managing this social aspect requires an empathetic and data-driven risk communication strategy to restore public trust after an incident (Giddens, 2020).

The integration of the four perspectives above demonstrates that mass poisoning in the MBG program is a multidimensional problem requiring a systemic solution. A partial approach that focuses solely on medical treatment, without addressing law enforcement or strengthening nutritional standards, will fail to prevent similar incidents in the future. A collaborative framework involving nutritionists, legal experts, human rights activists, and sociologists is needed to design a robust and accountable MBG program (Sukmana, 2023). The urgency of this research lies in the need to formulate a national protocol for managing school food poisoning that encompasses all these aspects. Through this comprehensive study, it is hoped that the government can identify weaknesses in the food distribution and procurement bureaucracy. Improving public welfare through nutrition can only be achieved if food safety is prioritized over cost efficiency and distribution speed (Friedman, 2021).

Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach, using descriptive-analytical methods and integrating normative and sociological studies to examine the mass poisoning phenomenon in the MBG program. Data were collected through comprehensive library research, encompassing analysis of laws and regulations (the Food Law, the Consumer Protection Law, and human rights regulations), reports of extraordinary events from health authorities, and sociological literature on public risk perception (Marzuki, 2021). Data analysis was conducted multidimensionally through data reduction, categorization based on legal, health, human rights, and social perspectives, and data verification to produce a holistic policy synthesis (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure the validity of the findings, the researchers applied theoretical triangulation techniques by comparing various scientific perspectives to obtain a comprehensive understanding of systemic failure and the state's responsibility in protecting citizens' basic rights (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Result And Discussion

Health Perspective Analysis: Hygiene and Cold Chain Failures

The study results indicate that mass poisoning incidents in the MBG program were clinically characterized by pathogenic bacterial infections resulting from failed sanitation procedures during processing and distribution. Epidemiological data indicates that cross-contamination frequently occurs in unstandardized communal kitchens, where raw cooking utensils are reused for cooked food without adequate sterilization (Adams & Moss, 2022). A major public health concern in this large-scale program is the neglect of safe holding times; food produced in large quantities is often kept in the "danger zone" (5°C to 60°C) for more than 4 hours before being consumed by students (WHO, 2020).

This health discussion emphasized that the impact of poisoning on children is far more fatal than on adults due to their immature immune systems and kidney function. Systemic failures in *Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points* (HACCP) monitoring indicate that health audits of MBG vendors remain administrative in nature and do not address consistent field practices. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of food processing personnel through hygiene certification is essential to prevent future outbreaks (KLB) (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021).

Legal Perspective Analysis: Absolute Liability and Regulatory Gaps

From a legal perspective, mass poisoning is categorized as an unlawful act by the authorities (*Onrechtmatige Overheidsdaad*) or negligence by service providers (*Tort Law*). Legally, vendors have absolute responsibility (*strict liability*) for the safety of the products they distribute; failure to provide safe food violates consumer rights as stipulated in the law (Marzuki, 2021). However, legal discussions reveal that compensation mechanisms for victims of government program poisoning are often hampered by complex bureaucracy, where the legal status of "government assistance" is often used as an excuse to mitigate liability for material damages (Asshiddiqie, 2019).

In addition to civil liability, there is a criminal law dimension if an intentional element is found in reducing the quality of raw materials for economic gain, resulting in casualties. Strict law enforcement against negligent vendors is crucial to deter such behavior. However, researchers argue that the law should not only punish after the incident but also establish preventive regulations requiring food poisoning insurance in every MBG program procurement contract to ensure immediate victim protection (Friedman, 2021).

Human Rights Perspective Analysis: The State as Guarantor of Rights

From a human rights perspective, mass food poisoning incidents are seen as a failure of the state to fulfill its *Obligation to protect*. The right to safe food is an inseparable part of the right to health, guaranteed by the constitution and international conventions (ICESCR). When a state initiates a MBG program but fails to monitor its safety, the state technically violates children's right to a healthy life (United Nations, 2018). This discussion emphasizes that children in the MBG program are subjects of rights, not simply policy objects who are allowed to receive food of inadequate quality.

A rights-based approach demands transparency in vendor selection and the availability of a complaint mechanism easily accessible to parents. In the event of poisoning, a human rights perspective requires the state to provide medical and psychological rehabilitation for the children as a means of redressing the

violated rights. The failure to respond promptly to the incident demonstrates that human rights sensitivity within the bureaucracy implementing national nutrition policies remains insufficient (Haryatmoko, 2021).

Social Perspective Analysis: Crisis of Trust and Program Stigmatization

Socially, mass poisonings trigger a "risk amplification" phenomenon, where public fear spreads faster than victims' medical recovery. A single incident in one region can damage the MBG program's nationwide reputation due to public perceptions of its perceived unsafe nature (Slovic, 2016). Sociological discussions have found that mass poisonings often trigger stigmatization of schools receiving assistance, creating psychological stress for students and teachers. Social capital, in the form of community support for government policies, can collapse quickly if risk communication is not managed with empathy and honesty (Beck, 2022).

This study also found that the social impact of food poisoning was more pronounced among low-income groups who rely heavily on the MBG program. Parents' doubts about the safety of school meals force them to shoulder the burden of providing food again, ultimately widening nutritional inequality if not promptly addressed by restoring trust. Transparent public communication regarding the causes of food poisoning and the government's remedial measures is the only way to mitigate the emerging social resistance (Sukmana, 2023).

Conclusion

Based on a comprehensive study, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of mass poisoning in the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program represents a multidimensional crisis that goes beyond a medical issue. Broadly speaking, the research findings outline four main points: Systemic Health Failures: Mass poisonings are fundamentally a result of failures in cold chain management *and* industrial kitchen hygiene standards. Neglecting food microbiology principles, particularly during the distribution phase, beyond the safe time threshold, is a major cause of the emergence of dangerous pathogens that threaten students' physical safety (Adams & Moss, 2022). Legal Accountability Gaps: There is ambiguity in determining the legal entity responsible between public authorities (the government) and third parties (vendors). Current law enforcement is primarily administrative in nature and does not adequately protect victims. A legal framework that adopts the principle of strict liability is needed *to* ensure victims' compensation rights are met (Marzuki, 2021). Violation of Basic Rights (HAM): Poisoning incidents represent a state's neglect of its obligation to protect *children* 's human rights to the highest standard of health. The state has an ethical and constitutional responsibility to ensure that any nutritional intake provided does not become a threat to the survival and development of future generations (United Nations, 2018). Destabilization of Social Capital: Sociologically, mass poisoning triggers widespread public distrust in the government's credibility. Risk amplification on social media exacerbates stigma against the MBG program, which, if not managed through transparent risk communication, could derail national strategic targets for improving nutrition and human resources (Slovic, 2016).

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