



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HEALTH STATUS OF CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT GOVT. AND PRIVATE AIDED SCHOOLS AND TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF MID-DAY MEAL PROGRAMME IN NAINITAL DISTRICT

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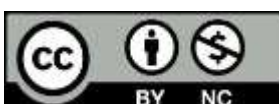
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Abstract: Child health and nutrition are fundamental indicators of national development and educational progress. The Mid-Day Meal Programme (MDMP), implemented by the Government of India, aims to improve nutritional status, school attendance, and academic performance among school-going children.

The present study compares the health status of children studying in government and private aided schools in Nainital district and evaluates the impact of the Mid-Day Meal Programme on their nutritional and educational well-being. The study examines anthropometric measurements, dietary habits, attendance records, and awareness regarding nutrition among students aged 6–14 years. A descriptive comparative research design was adopted using survey and observational methods.

Results indicate that children receiving regular nutritious mid-day meals demonstrate improved attendance, better Body Mass Index (BMI), and enhanced classroom participation compared to children with irregular nutritional support. However, disparities still exist between government and private aided schools in terms of infrastructure, hygiene, and nutritional quality. The study concludes that strengthening nutritional monitoring, hygiene practices, and community participation can further improve the effectiveness of the Mid-Day Meal Programme in Nainital district.

Key words: *Mid-Day Meal Programme, Child Health, Nutrition, Government Schools, Private Aided Schools, Nainital District, School Health.*





1. Introduction

Health and nutrition play a vital role in the physical, mental, emotional, and cognitive development of children. School-going children require balanced nutrition to support growth, immunity, concentration, and learning ability. In developing countries like India, malnutrition among children continues to remain a major public health concern despite several government interventions.

The Mid-Day Meal Programme, launched nationwide in India, is one of the largest school feeding programmes in the world. Its major objectives are to:

- Improve the nutritional status of children.
- Encourage school enrolment and attendance.
- Reduce dropout rates.
- Promote social equality among students belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds.

In Uttarakhand, especially in districts like Nainital, geographical and socio-economic conditions influence the nutritional status of children. Differences between government and private aided schools in terms of educational facilities, health awareness, sanitation, and food quality significantly affect child development. Therefore, assessing the health status of children and evaluating the effectiveness of the Mid-Day Meal Programme becomes essential for policy formulation and improvement in educational health services.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To compare the health status of children studying in government and private aided schools in Nainital district.
- To assess the nutritional impact of the Mid-Day Meal Programme on school children.
- To evaluate attendance and academic participation among children receiving mid-day meals.
- To identify health and hygiene practices followed in schools.
- To suggest measures for improving the effectiveness of the Mid-Day Meal Programme.

3. Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant difference in the health status of children studying in government and private aided schools.

H2: The Mid-Day Meal Programme positively influences the nutritional and educational status of school children.

4. Review of Literature

Several studies have emphasized the importance of school feeding programmes in improving child nutrition and educational outcomes.

- **Dreze and Goyal (2003):** Observed that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme increased school attendance and reduced classroom hunger.
- **Afridi (2010):** Reported that children receiving nutritious meals showed better concentration and participation in classroom activities.





- **Singh and Mishra (2018):** Highlighted that nutritional deficiencies among school children were more common in economically weaker sections.
- **Kumar et al. (2020):** Found that hygienic meal preparation and regular monitoring significantly improved programme effectiveness.
- **UNICEF Reports:** Have consistently emphasized that balanced school meals contribute to improved immunity and learning outcomes among children.

The literature indicates a strong relationship between nutrition, health, and educational achievement.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

A descriptive and comparative research design was adopted for the study.

5.2 Area of Study

The study was conducted in selected government and private aided schools of Nainital district, Uttarakhand.

5.3 Sample Size & Sampling Technique

Random sampling method was used for selecting schools and respondents. A total of 200 students aged 6–14 years were selected:

School Type	Number of Students
Government Schools	100
Private Aided Schools	100

5.4 Tools for Data Collection

- Structured questionnaire
- Observation schedule
- Anthropometric measurements (height and weight)
- School attendance records
- Interview with teachers and school authorities

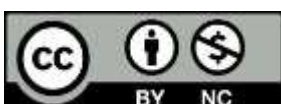
5.5 Statistical Techniques Used

- Percentage analysis
- Mean and standard deviation
- Comparative analysis

6. Results and Discussion

6.1 Nutritional Status

The study revealed that children in private aided schools had comparatively better BMI scores than children





in government schools. However, government school students receiving regular mid-day meals showed improvement in nutritional indicators over time.

6.2 Attendance and Academic Performance

The Mid-Day Meal Programme significantly improved attendance among government school students. Teachers reported increased classroom participation and reduced absenteeism after implementation of regular meal distribution.

6.3 Health and Hygiene Conditions

Private aided schools generally maintained better sanitation and hygienic conditions. In some government schools, issues such as inadequate kitchen facilities, irregular water supply, and overcrowding were observed.

6.4 Impact of the Mid-Day Meal Programme

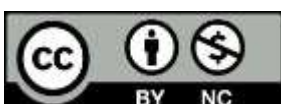
- Positive Impacts Identified:
 - Reduction in classroom hunger
 - Improved social interaction among children
 - Increased enrolment of economically weaker students
 - Better concentration and energy levels
- Challenges Encountered:
 - Irregular food quality monitoring
 - Limited dietary diversity
 - Insufficient infrastructure in rural schools

7. Findings of the Study

- Government school children benefited significantly from the Mid-Day Meal Programme.
- Nutritional deficiencies were more common among children from low-income families.
- Attendance rates improved due to free meal provision.
- Private aided schools showed better hygiene and infrastructure.
- Mid-day meals positively influenced children's physical and mental well-being.

8. Suggestions

- Nutritional quality of meals should be enhanced with inclusion of fruits, milk, and green vegetables.
- Regular health check-ups should be conducted in schools.
- Hygiene and sanitation facilities should be improved in government schools.
- Nutrition education programmes should be organized for parents and teachers.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of meal quality should be ensured by local authorities.





9. Conclusion

The Mid-Day Meal Programme plays a crucial role in improving the nutritional and educational status of children in Nainital district. Although disparities exist between government and private aided schools, the programme has successfully contributed toward reducing classroom hunger, improving attendance, and supporting child development.

Strengthening infrastructure, maintaining hygiene, and ensuring balanced nutrition can further enhance the effectiveness of the programme. Collaborative efforts from government agencies, schools, parents, and communities are essential for building a healthier and more educated future generation.

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