



## Perception of MDM Incharges Towards Implementation of Mid Day Meal Program in Delhi

Lalita Verma<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Anupa Siddhu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Lady Irwin College, Delhi University, New Delhi, India.

<sup>2</sup>Principal, Director, Lady Irwin College, Delhi University, New Delhi, India.

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### Abstract

*In 1925, a Mid Day Meal Programme was introduced for disadvantaged children in Madras Municipal Corporation. MDMS was first implemented for the children aged between 6-11 years to maximize enrolment and reduce school dropout rates, which were important from the viewpoint of universalisation of elementary education as well as achievement of higher literacy rates in the country (NFI, 2006). Involvement of the teachers could make this programme more authentic and acceptable. So the perception of MDM teachers is important to assess awareness among them regarding MDM. During observation it was found that no involved in supervising the distribution of MDM most of the incharges felt that MDM was an additional work and responsibility. From the tools it was found that 87.50 percent MDM-In charge were satisfied with the quantity and 62.50 percent MDM Incharge reported that MDMS is a very good scheme at least for poor children. But only 12.5% were satisfied with quality of MDM being served. By 56.2% Incharges accepted that there is leftover of MDM by the students and reason was students did not like the MDM. While 53.1% reported that parents do not allow the students to consume MDM from school. During observation only 21.9% MDM incharges tasted MDM before distribution. Many suggestions were given by the MDM incharges like quality should be improved and repetition of the same menus should be changed timely.*

**Keywords:** MDMS, Quality, Tasting, Leftover, Schools.

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### Background

Mid day meal Scheme (MDMS) is the popular name for the school meal programme in India. It involves provision of lunch/ snacks/ meal free of cost to school children on school working days. Mid day meal, as a public welfare concept in India, dated back to 1925 when such a project was launched for the underprivileged children in the then Madras Corporation area (NFI, 2006). Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) was initiated on the basis of the philosophy that “when children have to sit in class with empty stomachs, they cannot focus on learning” (Save the children India, 2009). Children are the future of mankind. Health and education are the primary needs. These are found to be more basic urgent for school going children as we go down to the level of primary school. The country is committed to achieving universalization of Elementary Education Covering Children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. But here at this level, one comes across a paradoxical situation of low enrolment of students in primary schools on the one hand and a large scale dropout of children from schools on the other (UNICEF, 2009). The factors identified for such a situation are the large scale poverty, malnutrition and under nutrition

amongst the school going children.

### Introduction

A school lunch programme was started in parts of Kerala in 1941; followed by Bombay implementing a free Mid-Day Meal Scheme in 1942, who with UNICEF assistance distributed skimmed milk powder to children aged between 6-14 years. A National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education commonly known as MID DAY MEAL PROGRAMME (MDMP) was re-launched by the then Prime Minister of India on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1995. MDMP was launched with the following objectives:

- Increased enrolment, improve school attendance as well as retention,
- Promotion social integration,
- Improve nutritional status of the primary school children and
- Inculcate good food habits in children.

In the Ministry of HRD guidelines of 2006 for MDM specifically mention that teachers should be ensuring that good quality, wholesome food is served to children, and the actual serving and eating is undertaken in a spirit of togetherness, under hygienic conditions in such a way that the entire process is completed in 30-40 minutes. It should be ensured that the food prepared is tasted by 2-3 adults including at least one teacher before it is served to children (JRM, 2013).

### Correspondence

Mrs. Lalita Verma,

E-mail: lalitaverma@gmail.com, Ph: +9199101 05025

## Materials and Methods

The study was approved by Ethical Committee of Department of Home Science, University of Delhi.

### Study design

Participants of this study were primary MDM incharges. The study was conducted in selected Government schools of Delhi. Schools were selected using multistage sampling. A total of 32 schools were selected. Total 32 primary MDM incharges were interviewed. A written consent was taken from all the primary MDM incharges who agreed to be the part of the study. A pretested questionnaire was given to primary MDM incharges to assess their perception regarding MDM. The questionnaire was translated in Hindi (local language) for better understanding of the primary MDM

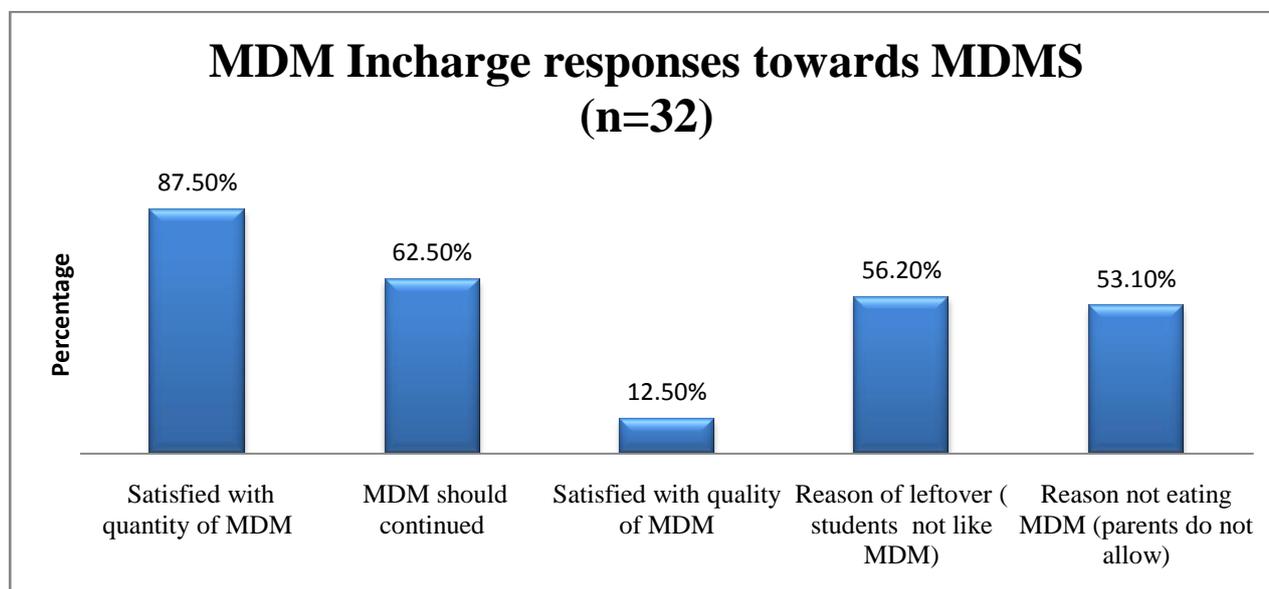
incharges. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 16.0.

### Data analysis

#### Perception of Primary MDM Incharges on MDMP

In order to understand the perception of MDM Incharge regarding MDM, a questionnaire was administered to the primary MDM Incharge teacher from the all schools. Teachers were generally positive about the meal. Hence they were not involved in supervising the distribution of MDM most of the incharges feel that it was an additional work and responsibility. They also reported that MDM is useful for the students because many of the students were deprived socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Figure I.** MDM Incharge responses on Mid Day Meal Scheme



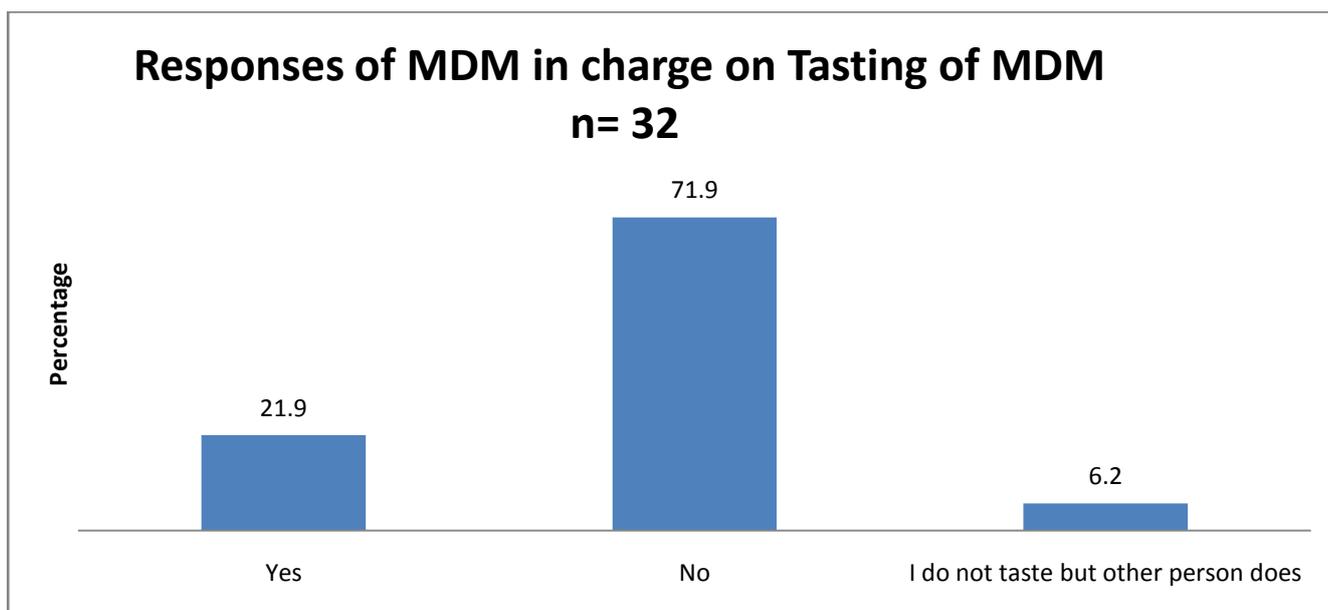
### Interpretation

Figure I demonstrate that 87.50 percent MDM-In charge were satisfied with the quantity received from FSPs. They reported that according to the requirement the FSPs increase or decrease the supply of MDM. They were interested in continuation of MDM. Almost 62.50 percent MDM-In charge reported that MDMS is a very good scheme at least for poor children. They also reported that the parents are interested that their children should avail MDM but few parents (53.10 percent) restricted their children to consume MDM. They accepted that leftover is there by student because the student do not like MDM was responded by MDM-In

charge. MDM-In charge responded that only 12.5% were satisfied with quality. They complained many times but no significant changes in quality of MDM.

#### Tasting of MDM by primary MDM Incharges

Figure II depicts responses of MDM incharge on tasting MDM. During observation very few teachers tasted the MDM, while 43.8 percent said that they have tasted MDM but during observation it was found that 71.9 percent not tasted MDM. And 28.1 percent accepted that they had not tasted MDM. In few schools other teachers (6.2%) tasted MDM. Tasting was not on regular basis.

**Figure II.** Responses of MDM in charges regarding tasting of MDM before Distribution**Interpretation**

Majority of the MDM-In charge did not taste Mid Day Meal before distribution. Only in 7 out of 32 schools found that teacher or MDM Incharge tasted the MDM before distribution as shown in Figure II. After Bihar tragedy, Bihar government made it mandatory for the principals and cooks of all primary schools in the state to taste Mid Day Meals before serving them to children. Mostly teachers were satisfied with the quantity but not with the quality. They also accept that there is leftover in the children's pot and the reason they told that the students do not like the MDM and quality could be the reason of it. MDM-In charges reported that not all but most of the students take MDM but do not finish it properly. So through these responses we can conclude that this is a myth that all students who attend these Government schools consume the Mid Day Meals adequately.

MDM-In charges were asked about the reason for why the students were not consuming food every day. 53.1% of the teachers reported that the parents do not allow students to have food served in Mid Day Meal Programme Figure I. These parents were skeptic about the quality of meal served. It was observed during the study that these children used to get Tiffin boxes from home. This again forces to re - think that is it true that majority parents send their children to schools because of Mid Day Meals?

About 62.5% MDM In charges think that the Mid Day Meal Programme should be continued Figure I. Most of the teachers suggested that quality of food needs improvement. Young children of class first have small appetite and cannot consume Mid Day Meal quantity which is generally served. They felt that the quantity can be reduced and if they required then second serving can be given to the young children and same suggestion was

given by principals in another study by Rekhi, 2007. Reasons could be many of leftover but 56.2% in-charges reported that the students do not like taste of MDM Figure I.

**MDM In-charges perceptions and suggestions with respect to MDM:**

- Several MDM In-charges reported that the menu of MDM should be modified because the students get bored with the same menu.
- Some MDM In-charges reported that dry food is more preferred because easier to distribute.
- MDM In-charges reported that quality of MDM was generally satisfactory but the cooking process and hygienic practices followed by the cooks can't be observed so they do not trust on FSP.
- MDM In-charges reported that students of primary section encountered high wastage the MDM while upper primary are able to eat MDM independently.
- MDM In-charges reported that many students do not carry Tiffin or any vessels to have MDM and schools do not have sufficient disposables so many students can not avail the MDM only because of want of vessels.
- MDM In-charges reported that MDM is not attracting the students. The reason may be quality, consistency and repetition of the same menus.
- Most of the children eat MDM only by influencing with the peer group but they do not eat adequately, so wastage of MDM.
- Still 62.5% MDM Incharges recommended to continue Mid Day Meal Programme.

- 28% children liked MDM because they feel hunger in school.
- They did not recommend supervised feeding for 5-6 year old children. Only 40% classes had teachers during break time.
- Intake data generally reveals that children somehow manage in class I<sup>st</sup> and II<sup>nd</sup> generally.

**Limitations:** Class Teacher also can be interviewed for proper in-depth perception.

### Summary and Conclusion

The right perception of MDM incharge about the MDMP and its impact on the children can be instrumental in their active participation in it. The investigator involved assessment of the perception of teachers about MDMP and its impact on the children. The present study was conducted to gain an insight into the perception of MDM incharge, in order to throw light on its operational aspect and to enlist their suggestions for improving this programme further. MDM incharges were interested to be continuation of MDMP but itself they did not taste it higher majority. MDM incharges accepted its positive and negative aspects. During the study it was observed that MDM incharges were not looking in well participation of MDMP. For success of any programme involvement is must especially from school inside otherwise there would be question on the authority for program implementation.

### Suggestions

Suggestions of MDM incharges can help to

enhance acceptability of MDM in schools and also can improve quality of MDM.

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