



## Free nutritious meals; Does it Impact Student Learning Motivation?

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### ABSTRACT

Education has an important role in the development of the younger generation. One of the factors that affect the quality of education is student learning motivation. This study aims to examine the influence of free nutritious food on students' learning motivation. This study uses the literature review method to collect and analyze various relevant previous studies. In this study, an analysis was carried out on the relationship between nutritious food intake and the level of student learning motivation at various levels of Basic Education. The results of the study show that providing nutritious food can increase students' concentration, energy, and endurance so that it has a positive effect on their motivation in learning. Students who receive free nutritious meals tend to be more engaged in learning activities, have better attention and are better prepared for academic challenges. In addition, nutritious food also plays a role in improving students' physical and mental health which greatly supports their cognitive development. In conclusion, the provision of free nutritious meals has a significant impact on students' motivation to learn, which ultimately has the potential to improve their learning outcomes. Therefore, the policy of nutritious feeding can be considered as a strategy to support increased student learning motivation and create a healthier and more productive learning environment.

**Keywords:** *Free Nutritious Food, Learning Motivation, Elementary School*

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in the development of a nation (Yuliati & Komarudin Sassi, 2024). One of the goals of education is to produce a generation of next-generation who are intelligent, creative, and highly competitive (Ozkan et al., 2023). However, to achieve this goal, various factors need to be considered, one of which is student learning motivation. Learning motivation is the main determinant of the quality of learning received by students (Habsy et al., 2023). Without high motivation, students tend to be less enthusiastic in participating in teaching and learning activities which can lead to low academic achievement. Therefore, it is important to look for factors that can affect students'

motivation to learn. One of the factors that is no less important is the physical condition of students, especially in terms of the food intake they consume (Purnama et al., 2024).

Nutritious food has a vital role in supporting students' physical and mental development. As the main source of energy, nutritious food will affect the ability of the body and brain to function properly (Lim & Kwak, 2019). Therefore, it is important to ensure that students get enough nutritional intake to support their activities especially during the learning process. However, in reality many students do not get enough nutritious food which impacts their concentration and energy. One solution that can be implemented is the provision of free nutritious food at schools. This free nutritious food can be one of the strategies to improve the quality of student learning (Andin et al., 2024).

Research on the influence of nutritious food on student learning motivation has been conducted by various researchers. Several studies show that nutritious foods have a significant influence on students' immunity, concentration, and brain performance (Purnama et al., 2024). With a healthy body condition, it is easier for students to focus on learning (Priskila & Arief, 2024). They also have enough energy to participate in existing academic and extracurricular activities. Proper nutritious foods can support brain development and facilitate a more optimal learning process (Connell et al., 2023). Thus, providing free nutritious food in schools has the potential to improve the overall quality of education.

Students' motivation to learn is not only influenced by internal factors, such as interests and talents, but also by external factors. These external factors can be in the form of social environment, family conditions, and facilities available at school (Ding, 2025). One of the facilities that can have a big impact on learning motivation is the provision of nutritious food. Nutritious feeding programs in schools can help address the nutritional problems experienced by many students, especially in areas with high poverty rates (Sharma et al., 2025). With nutritious food, students not only feel full, but also get nutritional benefits that support their brain function and body health.

Students' motivation to learn can also be influenced by physical and psychological well-being (Yengkopiong, 2025). When students feel hungry or don't get enough nutritious food, they will experience a decrease in energy and the ability to concentrate. This will of course have a negative impact on their motivation to learn. Conversely, by providing nutritious food, students will feel healthier and prepared to face the challenges of learning in school (Ju et al., 2025). They will feel more energized and have the energy to follow the lessons better. However, providing free nutritious food is not enough to increase students' motivation to learn. A holistic approach is also needed that involves various aspects of the education system (Samaratunga & Kamardeen, 2025). For example, training for teachers to create a fun learning atmosphere, as well as the development of a curriculum that is interesting and in accordance with the needs of students. With a comprehensive approach, it is hoped that nutritious feeding can have a greater impact on students' motivation and academic achievement (Desetria Cici et al., 2024). Therefore, the provision of free nutritious food should be seen as part of a broader effort to improve the quality of education.

Providing nutritious food in schools can also be part of government policies in improving student welfare. This free nutritious food program can be a form of government

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attention to the nutritional problems faced by most students in certain areas (Chinyoka, 2014). The program can also help reduce social inequality between students from underprivileged families and students from underprivileged families. With free nutritious food, every student has the same opportunity to get enough nutrition without being constrained by family economic factors. In this study, student learning motivation is one of the indicators of the success of the nutritious feeding program in schools (Şahin & Özkaya, 2025). If students feel satisfied with the food intake they receive, they will be better prepared and motivated to learn. In addition, these programs can also improve students' social well-being by providing them with better access to healthy food (Bartrina & Pérez-Rodrigo, 2006). By providing enough nutritious food, schools can create an environment that supports students' physical and mental development, which in turn will contribute to their improved academic achievement.

One of the factors that need to be considered in the implementation of a nutritious food program is the selection of food types that suit the nutritional needs of students (Ismail & Kumar, 2024). The food given must contain enough protein, carbohydrates, healthy fats, as well as vitamins and minerals needed by the student's body and brain. A balanced diet will have a greater impact in supporting students' health and learning motivation (Singh et al., 2025). Therefore, there needs to be cooperation between schools, nutritionists, and the government in designing the right nutritious food menu for students. It is also important to pay attention to the sustainability of this program so that the nutritious feeding program can run well. So commitment from various parties is needed, including the government, schools, and the community. Good cooperation will ensure that the program does not only stop at the feeding stage, but also includes education on the importance of balanced nutrition for body and brain health (Chernushenko et al., 2023). In addition, the sustainability of the program will help create a healthy living culture among students, which will have a positive impact on their motivation to learn.

High motivation to learn can encourage students to be more active in participating in learning, more active in doing assignments, and more enthusiastic in participating in school activities (Díaz et al., 2023). Therefore, it is important to know what factors can increase students' motivation to learn. One is to ensure that students get enough nutritious food that can support their physical and mental health. With a healthy body condition and sufficient energy, students will find it easier to concentrate and be better prepared to face academic challenges (Yuliati & Komarudin Sassi, 2024).

This study aims to explore the extent to which the provision of free nutritious food can affect students' motivation to learn. In this study, the researcher will conduct a literature review of various relevant studies regarding the relationship between nutritious food intake and student learning motivation. Thus, this research is expected to make an important contribution in understanding the role of nutritious food in improving the quality of education, especially in terms of student learning motivation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the literature review method, which is a method carried out by collecting, analyzing, and evaluating various relevant literature sources related to the topic discussed (Desetria Cici et al., 2024). The literature used includes scientific articles and journals that discuss the influence of nutritious food on students' motivation to learn. The researcher will sort out credible and relevant sources of literature with the main focus, namely the provision of nutritious food in primary schools and its impact on students' motivation to learn. These sources were selected based on certain criteria, such as the year of publication, the publisher's reputation, and the methodology used in the research. The literature used includes research conducted in different countries, taking into account differences in social, economic, and cultural contexts.

In the analysis stage, the researcher will identify key findings related to the influence of nutritious food on students' motivation to learn. The researcher will also analyze various factors that can affect this relationship such as the type of food provided, the socio-economic conditions of students, as well as other aspects relevant to learning motivation. Each finding from the literature reviewed will be compared and collaborated to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of nutritious food in increasing students' motivation to learn. Researchers will also assess whether the provision of nutritious food has a long-term impact on students' academic achievement, beyond just being a driving factor for learning motivation.

This analysis process is carried out systematically with the aim of drawing conclusions that can illustrate the impact of free nutritious feeding on students' learning motivation more broadly. The researcher will compile the results of the analysis based on predetermined categories, such as increased concentration, increased energy, and influence on students' mental health. The results of this literature review will be used to provide recommendations for education policies that focus on providing nutritious food as an effort to improve student motivation and learning outcomes. By using the literature review method, this study can provide a clear picture of the topics discussed without the need to involve primary data that is experimental or direct surveys.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to explore the relationship between the provision of free nutritious meals in primary schools and students' learning motivation. Based on the literature review conducted, there are various findings that support that nutritious food can increase students' motivation to learn. Existing studies have shown that healthy food intake not only affects students' physical health, but also has a direct impact on cognitive abilities and learning motivation (Lim & Kwak, 2019). One of the key findings found in various studies is that students who eat nutritious foods are better able to concentrate, have more energy, and are more motivated to take lessons.

One of the studies conducted by (Chinyoka, 2014) revealed that nutritious food can increase students' concentration, which in turn has a direct effect on their motivation to learn. Students who eat nutritious food are better able to focus on taking lessons compared

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to students who are malnourished. Nutritious food, as described in the study, provides enough energy for the brain and body, allowing students to stay active and engaged in the learning process. This shows that providing nutritious food can be one of the effective ways to increase students' motivation to learn.

Another study also conducted by (Ismail & Kumar, 2024) found that good nutritional intake is closely related to students' concentration ability. The results showed that students who had a balanced diet tended to have better memory, as well as more focus on assignments and exams. Better concentration will help students in understanding the subject matter more easily, so they become more motivated to learn. The study also found that feeding nutritious food has a long-term impact on students' academic abilities, with better learning outcomes.

Research by (Díaz et al., 2023) shows that providing free nutritious meals in schools can significantly increase students' motivation to learn. In an experimental study conducted, students who received free nutritious meals at school showed a significant increase in their learning motivation compared to students who did not receive nutritious food. Nutritious food not only provides benefits in terms of physical health, but also improves students' mental well-being (Purnama et al., 2024). Students who feel healthy and fit tend to be better prepared to face challenges in learning, which will certainly increase their motivation.

Researchers (Ju et al., 2025) also found that nutritious food can improve students' academic achievement. In this study, the nutritious food provided to students was shown to improve their academic performance, particularly in subjects that require high concentration, such as mathematics and natural sciences. Nutritious food helps improve the immune system and brain, so that students are better able to survive learning activities that require long time and concentration (Lim & Kwak, 2019). This suggests that nutritious feeding can contribute not only to increased motivation to learn, but also to students' academic outcomes.

The findings from (Ding, 2025) are also in line with previous studies. This research reveals that nutritious food has an important role in improving students' memory. Good memory is very important in the learning process, because students who are able to remember information well will find it easier to follow lessons and do assignments. The study also showed that foods containing omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin B12 had a very positive impact on students' memory and concentration. To make it easier to understand the differences, the researcher summarizes the above explanation in the form of a table as follows.

**Table. 1 The Relationship Between Free Nutritious Feeding at School and Student Learning Motivation**

Yes	Researchers	Year	Key Findings	Impact on Learning Motivation
1	Chinyoka	2014	Nutritious food increases students' concentration.	Students are more focused on learning, increasing motivation to learn.

2	Ismail & Kumar	2024	A balanced diet is associated with better memory and concentration.	Students are better able to understand the material, motivated to learn.
3	Díaz et al.	2023	Free nutritious food programs increase motivation significantly.	Students are healthier and fitter, better prepared to learn.
4	Ju et al.	2025	Nutritious food improves academic achievement, especially in subjects such as math and science.	Academic performance improves, motivating students to keep learning.
5	Thing	2025	Foods with omega-3 and vitamin B12 improve memory and concentration.	Students are better able to retain information and follow lessons.

Students' learning motivation is not only influenced by nutritional factors, but also by social and emotional environmental factors (Singh et al., 2025). Nutritious food can help create an environment that supports students' physical and mental development. When students feel healthy and adequately nourished, they will find it easier to adapt to the learning challenges they face. On the other hand, malnourished students may feel tired, get sick easily, and are less likely to be able to follow lessons well (Desetria Cici et al., 2024). Therefore, providing nutritious food can also help create a better learning atmosphere, which in turn will increase motivation to learn.

In addition, the type of food given to students is very necessary to pay attention to. Research shows that not all nutritious foods have the same impact on learning motivation. Foods that contain enough complex carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins and minerals have been shown to have a greater impact on students' concentration and energy (Samaratunga & Kamardeen, 2025). Therefore, schools need to ensure that the food provided to students contains balanced nutrients and according to their body's needs.

While free nutritious feeding has many benefits, it needs to be supported with other holistic approaches. Nutritious food needs to be balanced with efforts to create a supportive learning atmosphere, training for teachers, and the development of curricula that are attractive to students (Ozkan et al., 2023). With a comprehensive approach, the provision of nutritious food will be maximized in increasing students' motivation to learn and creating better educational outcomes.

Overall, the results of this study show that the provision of nutritious food has a significant impact on students' motivation to learn. These findings support the importance of free nutritious food policies in primary schools as a way to improve the quality of education. Nutritious food not only serves to meet students' physical needs, but also improves their memory, concentration, and motivation in learning. Therefore, this policy is

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very important to consider in order to improve the quality of learning and education in schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that free nutritious food has a positive impact on student learning motivation. The program helps students not only from the physical side, but also gives a significant psychological influence. Although the effect varies depending on the context and other factors, government policies in providing free nutritious food have proven effective in improving the quality of student learning motivation in several countries including Indonesia. For this reason, it is recommended that this nutritious food program be expanded and implemented in more schools, especially in areas with limited access to nutritious food. In addition, the government and schools need to pay more attention to the sustainability of this program by involving the community and parents in its implementation. More in-depth follow-up research on the long-term impact of these programs on academic achievement and student health is urgently needed to provide stronger evidence for these policies.

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