

# Integrating Nutrition Policy: Agenda-Setting Analysis of the MBG Program for Advancing Rural Sustainability in Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study was to determine the agenda-setting process of MBG policies in rural sustainability in Indonesia. The research was conducted using the policy agenda-setting theory by John W. Kingdon which includes indicators of problem stream, policy stream, and politics stream. This research uses qualitative research methods by collecting 300 online news articles from three media platforms, which are processed using NVivo12 Plus software. The results showed that the process of forming the policy program was more dominantly influenced by the politics stream (39%) than the policy stream (33%) or problem stream (27%). In addition, sentiment analysis showed that public reactions to the MBG were generally positive (74%), especially in political circles, support for nutrition benefits and government dedication. However, there were negative attitudes (25%), highlighting concerns related to fund allocation, politicization, corruption and skepticism. The convergence of the three flow indicators has created policy windows that have pushed MBG to become a strategic national agenda for the 2024-2029 government. In addition, the policy entrepreneur in question is an interested party from the village itself. Villages play an important role in the form of synergy to create food security ecosystems and support sustainable rural economic development. The contribution of this research will be a reflection by future researchers to further explore the process of the birth of the MBG policy so that it hopes to be a reflection of policy makers in mapping the policy priority scale for solving public problems. **Keywords:** Agenda-Setting; MBG Program; Rural Sustainability; Policy

## 1 Introduction

Villages are the evidential basis for identifying various development problems. Many development challenges in Indonesia can be solved if social and economic issues in rural areas can be addressed by building human resources, improving the economic system and

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realizing community welfare, and creating a more advanced Indonesia starting from the village. The urgency of village-focused development is fundamental to address, given that 43.3% of Indonesians live in villages [1]. In addition, seeing this political year, it is very interesting to see the political campaign of the Prabowo-Gibran candidate pair in the idea of their vision and mission. The vision is formulated in supporting Indonesia to advance to become the Golden Indonesia 2045. Then the mission was initiated into eight work programs, which one of the work program policies was to organize free lunches in schools and other educational institutions and nutritional assistance. However, now the free lunch program has been corrected and changed its name to *Makan Bergizi Gratis* (MBG) [2].

This policy program was promised by the Prabowo-Gibran pair during the presidential election campaign which aims to improve children's nutritional health and education, especially to help reduce the prevalence of stunting and build school enrollment rates among the poor [3]. In this case, the Government or Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani officially allocated the cost of the MBG program of IDR71 trillion in the 2025 Draft State Budget. Meanwhile, based on its impact on rural sustainability, the MBG policy program is expected to create a sustainable ecosystem, especially for improving the quality of life of the community by significantly reducing the stunting rate. In addition, this policy program will also be an economic stimulus, especially for local farmers because the basic ingredients of nutritious food will be purchased directly from the village, so that it can provide multiple benefits, namely increased health and income in the village.

In addition, the polemic over the MBG policy, which is the mainstay of the Prabowo-Gibran pair, cannot be avoided. Many experts view this kind of program as hastily formulated because the concept formulated is inconsistent and always changes when this policy program is made a national policy [4]. Until now, Indonesia still has other priorities from the MBG, namely, related to the development of the education sector to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development refers to Law Number 17 of 2007 which regulates the 2005-2025 RPJPN. The main concerns in the development of education include increasing the capacity of educational institutions, strengthening educational services to prepare Indonesian individuals to compete at the regional level. Therefore, the central government policy touches on the village government in the form of implementation realization.

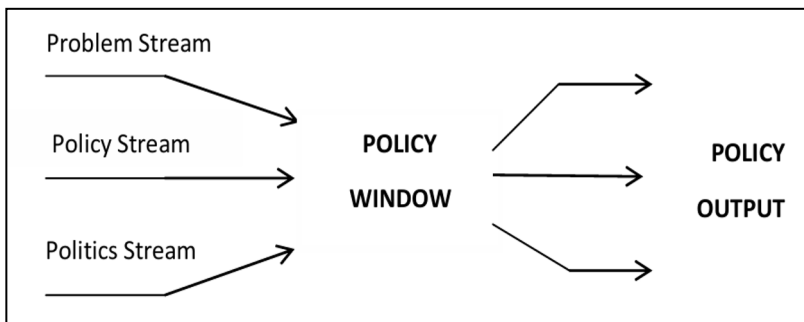
Meanwhile, scientific research on policy agenda-setting has caught the attention of researchers in the last 10 years. Researchers divide it into three indicators, namely agenda setting, policy, and sustainable development goals. According to [5] the policy cycle consists of agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. In addition, [6] suggests that social media is a vital instrument in building public engagement. The influence of social media and social bots on agenda setting. Revealed that political parties are more responsive to voters during the agenda-setting phase compared to the decision-making phase [7]. Furthermore, in the process of policy formulation in youth engagement according to [8] youth are often involved in problem identification and policy formulation, but rarely participate in agenda-setting, decision-making, or assessment processes. The VOSViewer analysis of keyword linkages from various journals is as follows.



*Stream*) processed using *Nvivo12 Plus Software* which is visualized in the form of Crosstab Query to answer the theory indicators and sentiment of the research results. In addition, to answer the sentiments, the researchers manually processed data from online news by entering positive and negative codes. The selection of this number is based on the concept of data saturation, which means that after analysing and collecting all news items, no further information or topics relevant to the research focus emerged. Thus, this number represents a complete dataset that has been analysed and is sufficient to answer the main questions and objectives of this study. The data analysis technique used in this research is according to Miles et al., (2014) which includes: Data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion making [11].

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Agenda-Setting Theory by John W. Kingdon



**Fig. 2.** John W. Kingdon's *Agenda-Setting* Model (Source: John W. Kingdon, 2014).

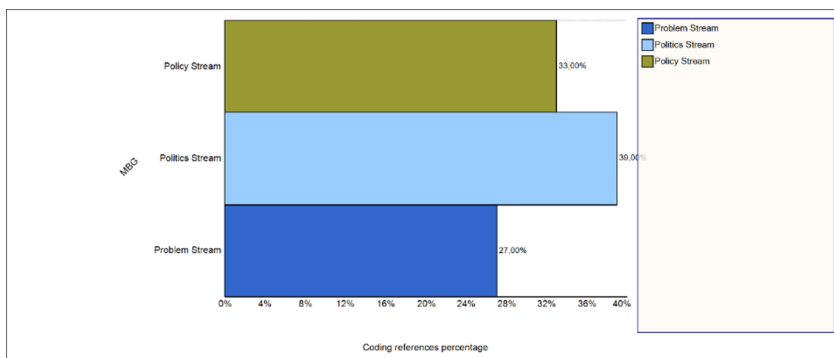
Based on the figure above refers to the theory put forward by John W. Kingdon (2014) that *agenda-setting* is the initial stage in the policy-making process where there is a list of problems and issues that are the focus of serious attention for the government and people who have authority in the decision-making process. The concept of *agenda-setting policy* put forward by John W. Kingdon there are three stages in the *agenda-setting policy* process, namely, *problem stream*, *policy stream* and *political stream*. These three stages, problems or issues will create a public policy [12]. The following is the explanation: 1) *Problem Stream*, namely policy makers must be able to search, find and identify ongoing and appropriate issues. In this case, issues or problems are considered by the government, which can be used as a government instrument to understand and assess a situation where the situation can be classified as an issue; 2) *Policy Stream*, this stage is addressed by policy-making actors after public issues have been defined and have gone through the selection process by the government. Policy makers or producers make solutions to resolve an issue that occurs in the community. Actors in the government include executive and legislative actors.

While other actors are non-governmental actors. Other actors such as academics, *private sector*, research organizations and consulting groups that have contributed to contributing solutions to the issues at hand; 3) *Political Stream*, This process has several actors who behave and act politically organized by several interest groups and try to influence policy makers to carry out and formulate wild policies in overriding the interests of other groups and promoting the interests of their groups. Based on these three processes, if there are no *policy windows*, it will affect until it becomes a policy agenda. The role of the policy window here is to encourage solutions that have been decided based on the three process

flows above, so that in the end it will form the presence of a policy agenda. In addition, on the policy-making agenda there are actors called *policy entrepreneurs* or parties who can bring together the three streams so as to produce an issue that can be made into a policy agenda.

Based on the theory that researchers use, namely *agenda-setting* according to John W. Kingdon in 2014 because it is in line with the complex nature of the policy formation process in the MBG case study in rural sustainability [12]. This framework is implemented by policymakers, namely the government, in making decisions in public affairs. The following description of the *agenda-setting* framework is shown below. Therefore, based on the figure above, *agenda-setting* has three main indicators in determining *policy output*, which include: *Problem Stream*, *Policy Stream*, and *Politics Stream*. Therefore, to find out what the *agenda-setting* process of the MBG policy is, researchers will conduct an analysis using NVivo12 Plus which classifies these three indicators.

### 3.2 Results of Analysis of Three MBG Policy Agenda-Setting Indicators



**Fig. 3.** MBG Policy *Agenda-Setting* Analysis Results (Source: NVivo12 Plus).

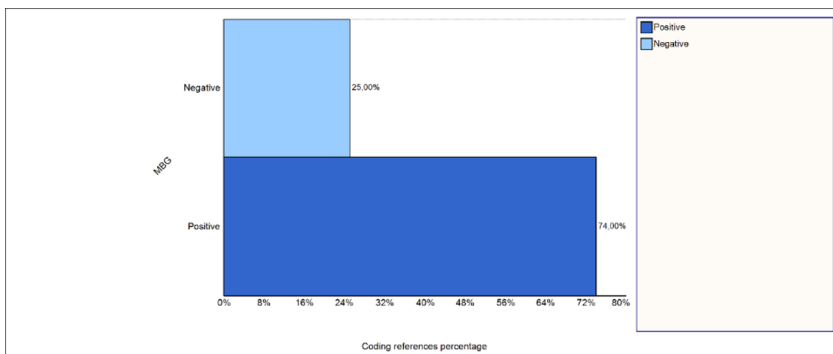
The data shown in Figure 3 shows the results of the MBG policy *agenda-setting* analysis measured in three main indicators. First, the *politics stream* (39%) shows that the political stream element is stronger in the occurrence of the MBG program policy than the other two elements because this indicator shows 294 files and 1533 references. As evidenced by the political stream, the MBG program became Prabowo-Gibran's main campaign promise in the 2024 election. After being elected, the Prabowo administration showed strong political commitment by allocating a significant budget for this program. During the campaign, Prabowo-Gibran promised to implement the MBG program in front of hundreds, if not millions of Indonesians, with an annual budget of IDR 450 trillion, based on a per-serving cost of IDR 15,000. After taking office, the cost per serving for the MBG program was reduced to an average of IDR 10,000.

Then the political element of media coverage, namely the media has a significant influence on public perceptions of the MBG program. Research by Vanti et al., (2024) shows that media such as Detik.com generally portrayed the program in a positive light, while other media such as Viva.co.id emphasized criticism and debate regarding its implementation [13]. These media frames shape public perceptions and may influence support for the program's push. Also, the MBG program has received criticism from various parties, including international organizations such as the World Bank and credit rating agencies such as Fitch and Moody's. They are concerned about the financial impact of this plan on the state budget. This pressure reflects international political dynamics, which could possibly affect the implementation of domestic policies.

Second, the policy stream (33%) came second in considering MBG policies and also shows that 199 files and 1388 references. Referring to Triana & Amali (2024) emphasized that the effectiveness of this initiative depends heavily on local technical and administrative readiness [14]. The MBG program plan aims to provide nutritious food for free to students at various levels of education, including primary schools, secondary schools, and Islamic boarding schools. The implementation of this strategy requires adequate infrastructure, including school kitchens, food supply systems, and skilled labor. In addition, President Joko Widodo issued Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2024 establishing the National Nutrition Agency on Monday, August 19, 2024. The National Food Agency is a government institution established by the President to handle national nutrition needs and is under and responsible to the President, as stipulated in the Presidential Regulation available on the Cabinet JDIH Secretariat website. This means that although there is an element of policy in pushing the MBG program, there is still a political element from President Joko Widodo before the official inauguration of the elected President and Vice President Prabowo-Gibran on 20 October 2024.

Third, the problem stream (27%) was the lowest impact in the consideration of the MBG policy process that shows 221 files with 1179 references. As well as high rates of stunting and malnutrition, Indonesia faces serious problems with stunting, with a prevalence of 21% in 2024, despite a decline from 24% in 2021 [15]. This suggests that hunger remains a serious problem that requires an urgent government response. Furthermore, socio-economic inequalities lead to significant differences in access to nutritious food among students. This negatively impacts student health and creates an inequitable learning environment. Thus, the MBG program plan aims to address these inequalities by ensuring that all students are adequately nourished. Malnourished children generally show reduced academic achievement and future labor productivity, which ultimately impacts national economic growth.

### 3.3 Sentiment Analysis, Policy Window, and Policy Entrepreneur



**Fig. 4.** MBG Policy Sentiment Analysis Results (Source: NVivo12 Plus).

The data shown in Figure 4 are the results of positive and negative analysis in 300 online news stories that have been collected in the agenda-setting analysis of the MBG policy. Dominantly showing positive sentiments (74%), in the MBG politics stream, the effectiveness of political communication in promoting the program through Instagram @prabowo.gibran2 managed to gain support from mothers and youth, who accepted this initiative as proof of concern for children. In this case, the MBG scheme reinforces the idea that the Prabowo administration supports the general public. In addition, the MBG policy stream references recommendations from nutrition and education experts who consider MBG as a strategic solution to address stunting and malnutrition, in accordance with the

principles of social justice and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This includes a scalable implementation framework that integrates school kitchens, local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and cross-sector collaboration.

Furthermore, in the positive sentiment, the problem stream is again emphasizing stunting as a national problem with efforts to reduce the stunting rate from 24% to 21% (2021-2024) still inadequate; the MBG program is considered a viable option. The MBG program was appreciated for successfully reducing inequality in access to nutritious food among underprivileged students, highlighting the importance of government intervention, as the community asserted that the state must ensure the fulfillment of children's nutritional needs for the future of the country's population.

On the other hand, in the negative sentiment (25%), in the politics stream, criticism related to the budget allocation has emerged, with some citizens and political analysts questioning the size of the budget required for this plan, which is estimated at Rp450 trillion. Concerns have been raised that such a large placement of funds could threaten the stability of the state budget and impact other critical initiatives. In addition, there are concerns regarding the possible politicization of this plan, with concerns that it could be used as a political tool to gain support, especially if implementation is inconsistent or lacks transparency. In addition, within the policy stream there are unclear implementation mechanisms, many stakeholders have highlighted the lack of clarity regarding the implementation of this initiative, particularly regarding the assignment of responsibilities and oversight methodologies. The potential for corruption and misuse of funds on large budget allocations raises concerns about the possibility of misuse of funds and corruption if there is no strict oversight mechanism. On the other hand, in the problem stream, some parties consider that although nutrition and stunting are important, other issues such as health and education infrastructure are considered more urgent. In addition, the effectiveness of free lunches is doubtful if they are not accompanied by nutrition education and improved sanitation.

Furthermore, based on the results of the three indicators above, in this case the role of the Policy Window is to bring together and push the three solutions into a policy agenda. Policy Window in this study broadly found that the element of political currents was stronger in the occurrence of the MBG program policy, namely the MBG program became Prabowo-Gibran's main campaign promise in the 2024 election with an annual budget of 450 trillion with the original per-portion calculation of Rp.15,000 to 10,000. Also, this MBG program has received criticism from many parties, including international organizations who are concerned about the financial impact of the plan. Furthermore, the Policy Stream comes second in considering the MBG policy where the MBG program plan aims to provide nutritious food for free to students at various levels of education, including primary, secondary, and Islamic boarding schools. The implementation here requires adequate infrastructure, including school kitchens, food supply, and labor. Meanwhile, the Problem Stream is the lowest impact in the consideration of the MBG policy process. Such as the high rates of stunting and malnutrition. In addition, socio-economic inequality causes significant differences in access to nutritious food among students. Thus, based on the policy window, it is necessary to push it into a policy agenda, namely through Policy Entrepreneur. Policy Entrepreneur in this study then aligns the research objectives which focus on the integration of nutrition with the environment through MBG policies to encourage rural sustainability.

## **4 Conclusion**

Based on 300 online news stories related to the MBG that were analyzed using John W. Kingdon's *agenda-setting* theory, the result was that the process of shaping the policy

program was more dominantly influenced by the *politics stream* (39%) than the *policy stream* (33%) or *problem stream* (27%). In addition, sentiment analysis showed that public reaction to the MBG was generally positive (74%), especially in political circles, highlighting widespread support for the benefits of nutrition and the government's dedication. However, there were negative attitudes (25%), highlighting concerns regarding the allocation of funds, potential politicization, corruption, and skepticism towards the effectiveness of the program. The convergence of the three flow indicators has created *policy windows* that have pushed the MBG into the strategic national agenda for the 2024-2029 administration. In addition, it requires the role of *policy entrepreneurs* as interested parties to push the *policy window* into *agenda-setting*. The effectiveness of implementation will depend on political consistency, technical policy readiness, and the relevance and management of community challenges. Therefore, the results of this research still need further review, given the limitations of the data obtained. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a basis for further research and serve as a reflection for all Indonesians, including policy makers, in following up on policy programmes that may not be urgent and require careful consideration in mapping out priorities for resolving public issues.

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