



**FREE NUTRITIONAL MEALS PROGRAM (MBG)
IN INDONESIA: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO
AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE
(SHARIA ECONOMIC REVIEW ON ASPECTS OF INSANIYAH
DEVELOPMENT)***

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program from the perspective of human capital development within an Islamic economic framework. MBG, which was born from President Prabowo Subianto's government program, does not contradict Islamic teachings in the slightest. This is not only from an Islamic economic perspective, but also in line with the spirit of implementing Pancasila values and the mandate of the 1945 Constitution. Moreover, world religions other than Islam also provide support for the MBG program according to their teachings, as do humanitarian institutions in the world. The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach, incorporating library research. With the accuracy of this methodology, its primary focus is on exploring the literature to provide strong reasons for both theoretical and empirical facts. The results of this study confirm that the MBG program is under the principles of Islamic economics in Indonesia as outlined by the *maqashid al-syariah* taught by the Qur'an and strengthens the human capital development system (*insaniyah*), especially Muslims, who are among the recipients of the tremendous benefits from the implementation of the program.

Keywords: MBG; Indonesia; Human Capital; Islamic Economics; *Maqashid al-Shariah*

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A. INTRODUCTION

All elements of the country are excited to follow the development of human development and the character of the Indonesian nation. Following the 1998 reformation, the government and the House of Representatives amended the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945), particularly Article 31, regarding investment in education.¹ The implementation of government policies after the amendment to the 1945 Constitution then gave rise to various derivatives. In the last ten years of the government led by President Joko Widodo, two critical programs have been derived from the macro concept of Indonesian human development: the development of Indonesian human behaviour (character), which is realised through the mental revolution program, and the development of understanding of religious behaviour through the religious moderation program.² Two character-building programs for the Indonesian nation were accelerated over ten years to cultivate a superior national character, dedicated to the noble values of the country based on Pancasila and religious principles (*akhlaqul karimah*).³

During the ten-year period of human development, a significant global event occurred, namely the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic changed all daily human behaviour, especially that of women and children who bear the burden. The pandemic has dashed many countries' hopes for improving human quality, and has also impacted human development in Indonesia.⁴

The journey of leadership change in Indonesia culminated in the election of Prabowo Subianto as the 8th President for the 2024-2029 government

¹ Sarung Allo, L., & Hasibuan, F. S. D. (2024). The Impact of Private Investment and Social Investment in the Education Sector in Indonesia. *Edukatif : Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6(1), 681–688. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v6i1.6385> British Council. (2023). Indonesia Education Budget 2023. British Council; Baharin, R., Halal, R., Aji, S., Yussof, I., & Saukani, N. M. (2020). Impact of Human Resource Investment on Labor Productivity in Indonesia. *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*, 13(1), 139–164. <https://doi.org/10.22059/ijms.2019.280284.673616>

² Nurlaili, Millah, C. U., & Nasution, E. M. (2024). Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia: Konsep Dasar dan Pengaruhnya. *Moderation: Journal of Religious Harmony*, 1(1), 9–14; Awadin, A. P., & Witro, D. (2023). Tafsir Tematik Moderasi Islam: Jalan Menuju Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia. *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 16(1), 171–200. Fahri, M. A. Z. (2019). Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia. *Intizar*, 25(2), 95–100. Retrieved from <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/intizar/article/view/5640>

³ Elvis, M. (2023). Kajian Terhadap Revolusi Mental dan Theory U: Suatu Upaya Untuk Mendukung Terjadinya Transformasi Mental Bangsa. *Jurnal Walagri Kebangsaan*, 1(1), 29–35; Wildan Nurul Fajar. (2018). Pelaksanaan Revolusi Mental Di Indonesia: Kajian Dalam Konteks Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan. *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents*, 3(April), 49–58.

⁴ Herianingrum, S. (2023). The role of Islamic economics and social institutions during the time of Covid-19. 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJIMA-05-2022-0134>

period. On November 29, 2024, the flagship program of President Prabowo Subianto's government, the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), was officially established at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta.⁵ There are numerous debates regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the program, including discussions on various topics and dimensions surrounding its launch, as well as comments on multiple aspects of the program's objectives. Additionally, economic debates have been raised that impact the central and regional government budgets due to the budget spending of Rp. 10,000 per child per day, so that the cumulative burden on the state budget reaches 71 trillion rupiahs. This raises debates on the cultural dimension, which is often said to be a culture of pampering the Indonesian people.⁶

This article is vital because it attempts to discuss other dimensions of contemporary issues from an academic perspective. It will limit itself to discussing MBG from the perspective of Islamic economics of human development. In this introduction, the author disclaims any opinions on other issues, such as budgeting and program effectiveness. Several countries, including Brazil, China, Finland, and India, have adopted the MBG program.⁷ However, most of the beneficiaries of the MBG program in Indonesia are Indonesian Muslims, unlike other countries that run the same program.⁸ Several study institutions and conventional economists have calculated the macroeconomic benefits of the MBG program. Even Indef (2024) noted that the MBG program has at least two advantages: encouraging economic growth at the central, regional, and local levels and encouraging the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

B. METHODS

The approach employed in this study is qualitative in nature. More specifically, using a library research approach. In line with its objectives, as outlined in the background of this article, this study aims to explore the discourse of social da'wah concerning the MBG program and its impact on human development from an Islamic economic perspective. The choice of a qualitative method approach is due to the need to gain a deep understanding of the description and practice of social da'wah in Indonesia's socio-economic context. The library research method approach enables researchers to

⁵ Media Indonesia, 2024.

⁶ Detik Bali, 2025.

⁷ Arif, A. (2024). Strategi Brasil Jadikan Makan di Sekolah untuk Atasi Masalah Gizi dan Kemiskinan. Kompas, (4 September).

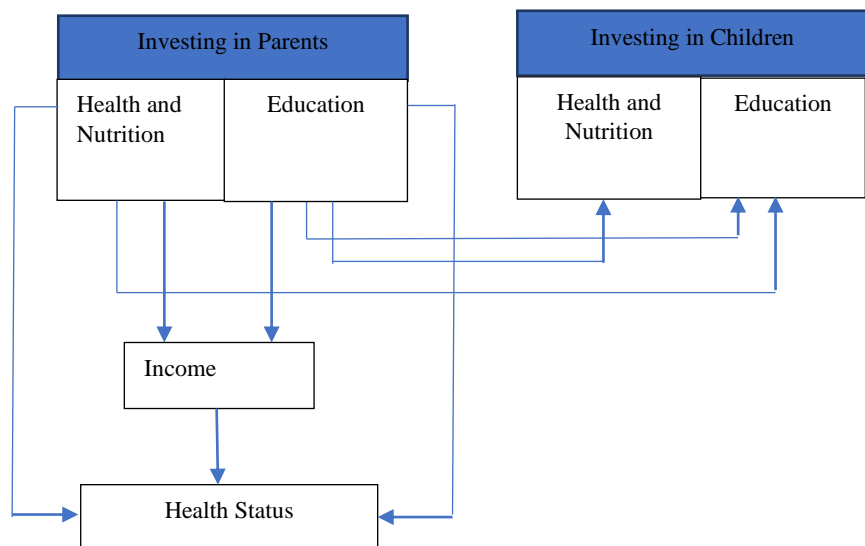
⁸ CNN. (2025). Bagaimana Islam Melihat Penggunaan Dana Zakat untuk Program MBG? CNN.

systematically gather theoretical and empirical information through literature searches, scientific articles, documents, and other relevant sources that cover the research topic. The study's objective is to present information in an elaborate, comprehensive, and in-depth manner regarding the Islamic economics perspective on the MBG program and its influence on addressing social problems within Indonesia's socio-economic context.

Analysis Framework

Before delving into the main discussion in this article, we will first outline the analytical framework of the human development mindset about investment in human development. The author covers various human development investment theories, including those by Mincer (1974), Romer (1989), Mankiw et al. (1992), Barro and Lee (2001), and Barro (2013).⁹

Figure 1.1
Analysis Framework



The analytical framework in Figure 1.1 above explains the indicators of human capital investment carried out by families and/or countries during

⁹ Mincer, J. A. (1974). *Schooling, Experience, and Earnings*. Columbia University Press, pp. 1–4. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c1762>; Mankiw, N. G., Romer, D., & Weil, D. N. (1992). A Contribution to the Empirics of Economic Growth. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 107(2), 407–437. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2118477>; Barro, B. R. J., & Lee, J. (2001). International data on education attainment: updates and implications. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 3, 541–563; Barro, R. J. (2013). Education and Economic Growth. *Annals of Economics and Finance*, 14(2), 277–304.

childhood. In every country that pays attention to its society, it is reflected very well in the health and nutritional status of individuals during infancy, breastfeeding, and childhood. The outcome indicators regarding health and nutritional investment made during childhood are: first, the education achieved by the individual; second, the income (productivity) obtained from work; and third, the overall health status.

C. RESULTS

1. Islamic Philanthropy Practices and Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG)

Accompanying the academic debate on the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program, this literature review will first discuss the concept of philanthropy within the Islamic context. Islam not only teaches its people about the afterlife (*ukhrowi*) but also demands that its people be involved in worldly affairs, such as solving social problems, including handling poverty.¹⁰ Philanthropy is also an element in religious teachings that addresses worldly problems, especially poverty alleviation.¹¹ Religion plays a vital role in human life for traditional and modern humans.¹² In terms of meaning, the term "philanthropy" is a relatively new concept in Islam; in its development, several Arabic terms have been used as equivalents. Philanthropy is often equated with *al-'ata' al-'ijtima'i* (social giving) or with the term *al-'takafu'l al-'insani'* (human solidarity), as well as the equivalent 'ata-khayri' (giving for good). Additionally, there is sadaqah, which means charity.¹³

¹⁰ Budiman, A., & Rasyid, A. F. (2023). Analysis Spirit Filantropi Islam Perspektif Aksiologi Max Scheler dalam Konteks Badan Amil Zakat Nasional Islamic Philanthropy Morale Analysis of Max Scheler's Axiological Perspective at National Amil Zakat Agency. *Jurnal Bimas Islam*, 16(2), 2657–1188. Retrieved from jurnalbimasislam.kemenag.go.id/index.php/jbi; Hayati, F., & Soemitra, A. (2022). Filantropi Islam Dalam Pengentasan Kemiskinan. *E-Mabis: Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen Dan Bisnis*, 23(2), 109–121. <https://doi.org/10.29103/e-mabis.v23i2.866>

¹¹ Syarifuddin, M. S., & Sahidin, A. (2021). Filantropi Islam Menjawab Problem Kesenjangan Ekonomi Umat. *Jurnal Penelitian Medan Agama*, 12(2), 101. <https://doi.org/10.58836/jpma.v12i2.11506>

¹² Jusuf, C. (2007). Filantropi Modern Untuk Pembangunan Sosial. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial*, 12(1), 74–84.

¹³ Zani, A. L., Akbar, A., Chandra, A. F., & Masyhur, L. S. (2020). Filantropi dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an serta Relevansinya terhadap Kesejahteraan Sosial. *An-Nida'*, 44(2), 189. <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v44i2.12931> Saripudin, U. (2016). Filantropi Islam dan Pemberdayaan Ekonomi. *BISNIS: Jurnal Bisnis Dan Manajemen Islam*, 4(2), 165. <https://doi.org/10.21043/bisnis.v4i2.2697> Saripudin, U. (2016). Filantropi Islam Dan Pemberdayaan Ekonomi. *BISNIS: Jurnal Bisnis dan Manajemen Islam*, 4(2), 165. <https://doi.org/10.21043/bisnis.v4i2.2697> Kholis, N., Sobaya, S., Andriansyah, Y., & Iqbal, M. (2013).

Islamic philanthropy dates back 15 centuries, to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The Abbasid Dynasty to the Ottoman Empire practiced philanthropy in various institutional forms, especially in the field of education, for example. Madrasah Nizhamiyah, which was founded in the 10th and 11th centuries AD in Baghdad, was a religious endowment (*waqf*) of the government at that time. The Ottoman Dynasty in the 18th and 19th centuries provided it in the form of a scholarly endowment. Al-Azhar University in Egypt is a campus with a source of funding from a religious endowment.¹⁴

As a country that interacts with the global world, implementing Islamic philanthropy also aligns with the international agenda known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of course, this supports Indonesia's sustainable development program.¹⁵ Uniting the welfare principle for humanity through the principle of “no one left behind” supported by all development stakeholders.¹⁶ According to Ningrum et al.,¹⁷ SDGs combine the relationship between economic, social, and environmental aspects that are strengthened by good government financial governance. Rakhman and Wijayana observe the allocation of central and regional government finances, with a focus on managing finances to achieve good human development.¹⁸

The SDGs share similar characteristics with philanthropy in terms of the sustainability of the impact achieved through their goals. The focus of the SDGs in Indonesia is on education, the environment, and health, aligning with the global agenda, so that philanthropy is expected to be a driving force in

Potret Filantropi Islam Di Propinsi Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta. *La_Riba*, 7(1), 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.20885/lariba.vol7.iss1.art5>

¹⁴ Herlina, S. (2020). Aplikasi Filantropi Dalam Ekonomi Islam. *Terapan Informatika Nusantara*, 1(4), 186–195.

¹⁵ Ridwan, I. F. (2022). Filantropi Islam: Peran dan Problematika Dalam Pencapaian Sustainable Development Goals. *La Zhulma, Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Islam*, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.70143/lazhulma.v1i1.27>

¹⁶ Indrawan, D., Palupiningrum, A. W., Rahmana, A., Nurhayati, P., Maryam, W. S., Razalli, M. R., ... Noordin, A. B. (2025). Food banks as a social innovation initiative: A comparison of social enterprise models between Indonesia and Malaysia. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 11(1), 100464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2024.100464>

¹⁷ Ningrum, L., Nooraeni, R., Berliana, S. M., & Sari, L. K. (2024). Association of SDG Indicators of the Social Development Pillar in Indonesia using the Apriori Algorithm. *Procedia Computer Science*, 245(C), 450–459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2024.10.271>

¹⁸ Rakhman, F., & Wijayana, S. (2024). Human development and the quality of financial reporting among the local governments in Indonesia. *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, 56(June), 100634. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intaccaudtax.2024.100634>

accelerating the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.¹⁹ Islamic philanthropy, with its social instruments, is expected to align with the goals of achieving the SDGs. According to Fast and Widerberg,²⁰ synergy between philanthropic instruments is necessary to effectively allocate the primary tasks and functions of each instrument, thereby eliminating obstacles that can slow down the pace of achieving the MDGs. Even according to Ningrum et al.,²¹ the SDG goals in Indonesia are organised into four main pillars, each addressing the dimensions of development through the pillars of social, economic, environmental, and legal and governmental development. There are 17 goals and 289 indicators to measure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); achieving one indicator will have an impact on the achievement of other SDG indicators. There are four SDG goals: poverty alleviation (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2), a healthy and prosperous life (Goal 3), and quality education (Goal 4).

The relevance of the MBG program to the direction of the SDGs continues to be adjusted in response to the state's financial conditions.²² The program is closely aligned with the provisions of the 1945 Constitution, Articles 31 and 34, regarding education and poverty alleviation. It is necessary to see another side of the Indonesian government's enthusiasm in realising the MBG, namely the explanation from the Islamic Development Bank/IsDB,²³ In one of its reports, the IsDB explains that its investment in the education sector is based on its policy efforts to shift from schools to learning, in line with global efforts to transform education and overcome the learning crisis.

Referring to the IsDB, poverty is essentially a condition characterised by an inability to meet basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, education, and healthcare. A study in China by Qi, Deng, and Li²⁴ highlights the

¹⁹ Asadullah, M. N., Webb, A., & Islam, K. M. M. (2024). SDG 4 mid-point challenge: Fixing the broken interlinkages between education and gender equality. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 106(January), 103015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2024.103015>

²⁰ Fast, C., & Widerberg, O. (2025). Governance through goals in action: How multi-stakeholder partnerships translate and connect the SDGs. *Earth System Governance*, (January), 100238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2025.100238>

²¹ Ningrum, L., Nooraeni, R., Berliana, S. M., & Sari, L. K. (2024). Association of SDG Indicators of the Social Development Pillar in Indonesia using the Apriori Algorithm. *Procedia Computer Science*, 245(C), 450–459. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2024.10.271>

²² Fast, C., & Widerberg, O. (2025). Governance through goals in action: How multi-stakeholder partnerships translate and connect the SDGs. *Earth System Governance*, (January), 100238. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2025.100238>

²³ Islamic Development Bank. (2023). 2023 ANNUAL REPORT IsDB.

²⁴ Qi, P., Deng, L., & Li, H. (2024). China Economic Review Does the county-based poverty reduction policy matter for children's human capital development? ☆. *China Economic Review*, 85(December 2023), 102147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2024.102147>

complexity of the poverty problem, which extends beyond poverty itself to impact and damage all aspects of life, particularly education, significantly influencing the human quality development system. Moreover, according to Sulkifli's²⁵ study, poverty can have implications for health levels, educational infrastructure, and unemployment.

In the concept of philanthropy for social justice, there are elements of community empowerment that are productive and effective.²⁶ Empowerment is an effort to increase community capacity as a multidimensional process, including natural resources, human resources and social resources.²⁷ From a socio-cultural perspective, human resources are key actors in development, both as individuals and as members of society, encompassing the ability to produce, promote equality, grant authority, ensure continuity in development, and foster awareness of interdependence.²⁸

In the concept of social justice philanthropy, which is pursued through social development, it is believed that poverty is more often caused by injustice in the allocation of resources and access to power in society.²⁹ Modern philanthropy is expected to encourage structural and policy changes to favor the weak and minorities. Human resources differ from natural resources, where the more significant the quantity or number, the greater the potential for development. However, in the case of human resources, the quality aspect is much more important than the quantity aspect.³⁰ This is because the more human resources there are, the more it can become a burden rather than an asset. Additionally, quality can impact productivity. The quality of human

²⁵ Sulkifli. (2018). Filantropi Islam Dalam Konteks. *Journal of Social-Religion Research*, 3(1), 1–12. Retrieved from <http://ejournal-iainpalopo.ac.id/palita>

²⁶ Aziz, A. (2011). *Ekonomi Sufistik Model Al-Ghazali (pertama)*. Bandung.

²⁷ Abrori, A., & Kharis, A. (2022). Dakwah Transformatif Melalui Filantropi: Filantropi Islam Dalam Mengentas Kemiskinan Dan Ketidakadilan. *Jurnal Al-Ijtima'iyah*, 8(1), 102. <https://doi.org/10.22373/al-ijtima'iyah.v8i1.13009>

²⁸ Surizkika, A. (2024). Dakwah Sosial Dan Filantropi Islam: Transformasi, Kesejahteraan Dan Keadilan Bagi Masyarakat. *Jurnal Sahid Da'Watii*, 3(01), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.56406/jurnalsahiddawatii.v3i01.459>

²⁹ Mahmudah, H. (2019). Kemiskinan dan Filantropi Agama. *Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah*, 2(1), 1–21. Retrieved from <http://www.seputar-indonesia.com/ediscetak/opini/kemiskinan-dan-filantropi>

³⁰ Zuchroh, I. (2023). Islamic Philanthropy: Potential and Realization. *Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies*, 4(1), 663–670. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.umsu.ac.id/index.php/insis/article/view/14030>

resources can be assessed in several aspects, including education, health, economy, politics, and others.³¹

The MBG program for school children (school nutritious meals program) is a significant investment in human development. MBG will provide long-term benefits in the future, especially in preparing a bright, healthy, and high-achieving generation to welcome the golden Indonesia 2045.³² With a large population, Indonesia has great potential and very adequate human capital to build a golden generation. However, there are challenges ahead if abundant human resources are not appropriately managed. The problems faced include malnutrition in school-age and toddler populations. The same phenomenon is also experienced by many countries worldwide, as reported by the UN-SDGs.³³

Referring to the literature review on Islamic philanthropy described above, this paper aims to correlate the views on Islamic philanthropy presented in the literature with the implementation of the MBG program initiated by President Parbowo. Free Nutritious Meals focuses on addressing the nutritional needs of school children within the context of the global development agenda. Malnutrition is a serious problem, and the low Human Development Index (HDI) is also a key reason for prioritising MBG. The global development agenda addresses this issue through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focus on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.³⁴

When the SDG agenda was introduced in 2015, it was estimated that 795 million people in the world (the majority of whom were children) suffered from malnutrition, even causing around 45% of deaths of children under five; this condition is no exception for Indonesia. The global lack of access to sufficient nutrition indicates severe food insecurity, underscoring that malnutrition has a direct impact on school-age children. For children who are still growing and developing, if they suffer from malnutrition and experience micronutrient deficiencies, they are at high risk of various infections and chronic diseases as adults.³⁵

³¹ Jusuf, C. (2007). *Filantropi Modern Untuk Pembangunan Sosial*. Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Kesejahteraan Sosial, 12(1), 74–84; Ridwan, I. F. (2022). *Filantropi Islam: Peran dan Problematika Dalam Pencapaian Sustainable Development Goals*. La Zhulma | Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Bisnis Islam, 1(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.70143/lazhulma.v1i1.27>

³² Media Indonesia, 2024

³³ USG-UN. (2015). *Global Sustainable Development Report*.

³⁴ *Unicef*. (2020). *POST-COVID WORLD: Toward a Rapid Transformation*.

³⁵ British Council. (2023). *Indonesia Education Budget 2023*. British Council.

The World Food Programme (WFP) noted that as many as 67 million children worldwide cannot attend school, and 66 million children go to school hungry, without breakfast, thereby reducing their learning motivation.³⁶ Malnutrition not only interferes with learning concentration, but also, more seriously, it can damage cognitive abilities, causing children to struggle with focusing on lessons, be slow to follow the learning process, and be unable to achieve academically. The relationship between learning achievement and nutritional adequacy is a real and causal one.

For pregnant women, MBG is particularly relevant, as is the case for toddlers (babies under five years old) who are still growing and developing. If they do not get sufficient nutritional intake, they will experience stunting or imperfect growth and development.³⁷ School-age children who do not consume nutritious food will be unable to develop their cognitive, physical, and mental health to their full potential. Various scientific studies indicate that the first two years are characterised by the growth of brain cell volume and tissue, as well as the development of hearing and vision functions, and language skills. Human brain development is well-developed at the age of two.³⁸ Therefore, it is entirely understandable that two world bodies, UNESCO and UNICEF, are deeply concerned when toddlers and school-age children experience malnutrition because it has a direct impact on learning outcomes and academic performance in schools. Of course, we are also concerned every time we read the SFN/Stronger Foundation for Nutrition 2023 report.

MBG embodies global and national ideals for the continuity of essential life fulfillment, especially in Indonesia, which is being aspired to alongside a quality generation towards a Golden Indonesia 2045. As Muslims, of course, it is not just a matter of following the direction of good national policies. Still, the basis for the practice of MBG, stemming from the meaning of siding with poverty alleviation, has been legitimised by divine guidance, specifically when Allah gave His command to the Prophet Muhammad to lead a fortunate and happy life, while also purifying the soul. Starting from eating and drinking. "O Messengers, eat good food and do good deeds" (QS Al-Mu'minuun [23]: 51). Another verse reads, "O people, eat some food on earth that is halal and good,

³⁶ Islamic Development Bank. (2023). 2023 ANNUAL REPORT IsDB.

³⁷ LPPM Stikes Hang Tuah Pekanbaru. (2015). Permasalahan Anak Pendek (Stunting) dan Intervensi untuk Mencegah Terjadinya Stunting (Suatu Kajian Kepustakaan) Stunting Problems and Interventions to Prevent Stunting (A Literature Review). Jurnal Kesehatan Komunitas, 2(5).

³⁸ Louis-jacques, P. R. (2023). Investigating The Impact Of Human Capital Development On Brazil's Economic Growth. International Journal of Innovation Scientific Research and Review, 05(October), 5315–5319.

and do not follow the steps of Satan." Allah also says (QS an-Nahl [16]: 114); "Eat some of what Allah has given you as lawful and good (sustenance) and be grateful for Allah's blessings if you only worship Him."

2. The Concept of Human Development According to Islam

The concept of Human Development is presented comprehensively by Islam. According to Islamic concepts, humans are considered the most perfect creatures. Tambunan et al³⁹ explain that in the Qur'an, three key terms refer to humans, namely 'basyar', 'insan', and 'al-nas'. Additionally, there are other concepts used to explain humans, namely 'unasiy', 'insiy', and 'ins'. 'Basyar' itself suggests humans as biological creatures. As for the word 'insan', there are many meanings that accompany it; 'insan' is associated with its specialness as a caliph who carries the mandate. 'Insan' is also related to negative predispositions in itself. 'Insan' is associated with the process of human creation, encompassing psychological and spiritual traits.

Referring to Abdullah's study,⁴⁰ he explained that from an Islamic perspective, there are differences and uniqueness in understanding the theory of human capital. Islam emphasises the development of human abilities and skills, but seeks to achieve goals and objectives that differ from those understood by Western scientists. He explained from the phenomenon of the Islamic view according to Abduhu who stated that human capital consists of every member of society, whether it is visible or latent and the meaning of human resource development is: utilising nutritional sources, a good way to enter appropriate nutrition into other members of society for progress in providing benefits in large quantities and quality to determine the ultimate goal of society.

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³⁹ Khairina Tambunan; Rahmat Azahar Siregar; Azhari Akmal Tarigan; Isnaini Harapan. (2022). Konsep Indeks Pembangunan Manusia dalam Al-Qur'an Perspektif Quraish Shihab. Human Falah, 9(2).

⁴⁰ Abdullah, F. (2012). The role of Islam in human capital development: a juristic analysis. Humanomics, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/08288661211200997>

every member of society, whether it is visible or latent and the meaning of human resource development is: utilising nutritional sources, a good way to enter appropriate nutrition into other members of society for progress in providing benefits in large quantities and quality to determine the ultimate goal of society.⁴¹

This opinion suggests that Islam views human development not only in terms of intelligence, competence, or physical form, but more comprehensively, encompassing both physical and spiritual aspects. In fact, according to Abduhu's definition, human resource development is for the benefit of humanity, as he stated that it enhances society's ability to provide better services in its respective fields. This is the key to the Islamic worldview, which holds that everything on earth is for the benefit of humanity.

3. The Concept of Human Development Influenced by the Teachings of World Religions

The concept of human development can also be examined from various religious perspectives worldwide. Starting with Adam Smith's (1776) publication in 1776, "The Wealth of Nations" laid the foundation for the economic analysis of religion. According to him, the 'production' of religiosity is similar to the production of goods, in the sense that, just as in companies, market forces operate within the church. Like the economy, religion benefits from competition, and, like producers, pastors are motivated by self-interest.⁴²

Abdullah's⁴³ research explains the opinion of Garry Becker in 2009, as a Human Capital Economist, who said that Schools, computer training courses, spending on medical care, and lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are also capital. That is because they increase income, improve health, or foster good habits throughout a person's life. Therefore, economists consider spending on education, training, medical care, and other similar expenditures as investments in human capital.

This opinion is concurrent with the empirical understanding of the concept of human development through education, influenced by the role of

⁴¹ Abdullah, F. (2012). The role of Islam in human capital development: a juristic analysis. *Humanomics*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/08288661211200997>

⁴² Neuman, P. B. G. S. (2003). *Analysing Religiosity Within an Economic Framework: The Case of Spanish Catholics*.

⁴³ Abdullah, F. (2012). The role of Islam in human capital development: a juristic analysis. *Humanomics*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/08288661211200997>

religion in the world. The general public has limited knowledge of the role of religion in shaping education. It is necessary to examine the study by Feldmann,⁴⁴ which analysed data from 150 countries. The manuscript explains how the world is influenced by religious teachings that have shaped education since ancient times. Before the nineteenth century, religious organisations were the most prominent and often the only providers of educational and healthcare services in most countries.

In East Asia, religions such as Protestantism also promote the integration of education into human development efforts. A study by Becker and Nagler explains that understanding the seismic sources of religious change is crucial, as the spiritual orientation of a society can significantly impact long-term human development by shaping attitudes towards factors such as education and the dissemination of knowledge.⁴⁵ In fact, according to him, Muslim education influences the development of education. Another study by Brown and Taylor explains that if education increases the benefits of social activities, then we can expect a positive relationship between education and formal social activities, such as religious activities.⁴⁶

Likewise, a study by Darnell and Sherkat,⁴⁷ explaining the influence of education on fundamentalist Protestant groups, likens the relationship between teachers and schools to that of parents and families; this prioritises solely harmonious conditions in building humans. The affirmation of human development also comes from Feldmann's study (2016),⁴⁸ where, according to him, education is not merely a historical legacy, because if it were, it would be quickly abandoned by religions in today's education. Traditionally, education has played a key role in most religions worldwide. Famous examples are Confucianism, Judaism and Protestantism. Confucius considered education to

⁴⁴ Feldmann, H. (2019). World Religions and Human Capital Investment: The Case of Primary Education. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 31(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0260107918812306>

⁴⁵ Becker, S. O., & Nagler, M. (2017). Education and religious participation: city-level evidence from Germany's secularisation period 1890 – 1930. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 22(3), 273–311. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10887-017-9142-2>

⁴⁶ Brown, S., & Taylor, K. (2007). Religion and education: Evidence from the National Child Development Study. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 63, 439–460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2005.08.003>

⁴⁷ Alfred Darnell; Darren E. Sherkat. (1997). The Impact of Protestant Fundamentalism On Educational Attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 62.

⁴⁸ Feldmann, H. (2016). Which Religions Still Affect Schooling? A Study of 143 Countries. *Comparative Sociology*, 15(4), 439–484. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15691330-12341394>

be the most crucial task in society. A study by Brown and Taylor⁴⁹ explains that identifying the determinants of religious activity contributes to an understanding of the impact of religion on resource allocation. He explained that individuals who replace religious activities with labor market activities, as stated by Lipford and Tollison (2003).

D. DISCUSSION

1. MBG and Social Justice According to Islam

MBG is a vital program in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children, pregnant and lactating mothers need a special touch as a guarantee of their continued health. Pregnant and lactating mothers must receive adequate nutritional guarantees so that breastfed children receive nutritional guarantees, especially for pregnant mothers who need to be guaranteed that their children will be born healthy and normal both physically and mentally. Dietary issues for children, pregnant and lactating mothers are a problem in many developing and underdeveloped countries.

Nutrition fulfillment programs for children, pregnant and lactating mothers are very important from a human capital perspective. The essence of a nation's wealth lies in its human capital, while children, pregnant and lactating mothers, represent an effort to give birth to a better generation of humans. Therefore, the primary goal of nation-building is to create an environment that enables its people to enjoy a long and fulfilling life, be physically and mentally healthy, and lead a productive life. In his research, he explained that Islam has five universal values that form the basis for building an economy, namely tauhid (faith), 'adl (Justice), nubuwwah (prophethood), khilafah (government), and ma'ad (retribution). The five universal values are used to measure the propositions and theories of Islamic economics. Islamic economic theory has a general goal of guiding economic activity efforts, both at the micro and macro levels, with the intention of achieving maqashid shari'ah (the essence of the goals of shari'ah).⁵⁰

Furthermore, to implement Islamic economics based on maqashid sharia, Al-Syathibi, as an aligner of the understanding of Islamic economics with previous scholars, classified the levels of maqashid al-sharia based on

⁴⁹ Brown, S., & Taylor, K. (2007). Religion and education: Evidence from the National Child Development Study. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 63, 439–460. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2005.08.003>

⁵⁰ Jaya, Arisman. (2022). Pembangunan manusia dalam perspektif ekonomi islam untuk mencapai falah. *Jurnal Dialogika*, 4(1), 33–38.

masalah, which is based on the interests of muamalah. According to Adzkiyal's study, Mashlahah al-dharuriyyah is something that must be fulfilled or implemented by humans (mukallaf) to achieve the masalah of both the world and the hereafter.⁵¹ If something important is not present, it can cause damage or even loss of life, such as eating, drinking, praying, fasting, and other forms of worship. MBG is essential for fulfilling the food and drink needs of the golden generation in Indonesia, ensuring the survival of this generation through nutritious food. Therefore, this is in complete accordance with the command of maqashid al-sharia to create Mashlahah al-dharuriyyah.

2. MBG and the Background of Humanitarian Spirit from Various Countries

President Prabowo Subianto's visit to Brazil to learn about the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program is appropriate, considering that Brazil is one of the countries with a success story in implementing a nutritious meal program and can serve as a reference for Indonesia. In implementing the MBG program, the Indonesian government, under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto, has made efforts to learn from various countries that have implemented similar programs. Brazil is one of the countries implementing the Free Nutritious Meals (MBG) program.

Moreover, according to research by Ramalho et. al.,⁵² the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected in children's health and continues into adulthood. It has been recognised that prevention strategies are a priority in combating childhood obesity. Schools are a better environment for maintaining human capital. So it is necessary to pay attention to elementary school students to understand the need for a preventive community nutrition program. This effort is also relevant to that carried out by the Indonesian government in the MBG program. Moreover, numerous studies support similar policies. For example, Mickelsson and Oljans highlight the importance of nutrition management policies in South Africa.⁵³ They focused their research in Zimbabwe, where children and students under 18 years of age face a food

⁵¹ Adzkiyal, Ubbadu. (2020). Analisis Maqashid Al-Syariah dalam Sistem Ekonomi Islam dan Pancasila. *Jurnal Ekonomi Syariah Indonesia*, X(1), 23–35.

⁵² Ramalho, R., Medeiros, M., Caldeira, J., Órfão, F., Pereira, P., Ramalho, R., ... Pereira, P. (2019). The reality of elementary schools: a call for urgent community nutrition programs. *Annals of Medicine*, (May). <https://doi.org/10.1080/07853890.2018.1561995>

⁵³ Mickelsson, M., & Oljans, E. (2025). Food, health and sustainability: How students navigate conflicting choices in social contexts. *Health Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00178969251314728>

environment every day inside and outside the school environment, which is characterised by food poverty and the risk of recurrent malnutrition.

Another study by Feldmann,⁵⁴ which analysed data from 150 countries, examined whether and how the world's largest religion has influenced primary education rates at the national level over the period 1972–2010. The study's results revealed that primary education has been compulsory in most countries for several decades, as indicated by regression results suggesting that religion can influence this type of education. Specifically, Protestantism and Catholicism have a positive impact on male primary school enrollment rates, whereas Hinduism and Buddhism have a negative impact on female primary school enrollment rates.

Along with the issue of MBG, another perspective from research in the Philippines suggests that adults who are heavily dependent on agricultural wage income and experience stunted growth due to poor health and nutrition during childhood may incur substantial lifetime earnings losses. Such stunted growth is permanent for today's adults, implying that little can be done to improve their productivity through better nutrition.⁵⁵

Back to Brazil's steps to adopt an integrated, closed-loop food and nutrition security policy in conjunction with other policies. According to Campino A.C.C.,⁵⁶ Brazil has long believed that human development policies must be implemented through integrated programs managed by involving the public sector (Ministries/Agencies), the private sector (agricultural companies, agribusiness), and the third sector (NGOs, trade unions, rural confederations, employers' federations) which provide a multiplier effect in various sectors.

According to Louis-Jacques' research,⁵⁷ Brazil itself genuinely believes that the nutritious meal program in schools will lead to future economic growth. Therefore, it is fitting that the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) plan presented by President Prabowo Subianto to state leaders at the G20

⁵⁴ Feldmann, H. (2019). World Religions and Human Capital Investment: The Case of Primary Education. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics*, 31(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0260107918812306>

⁵⁵ Haddad, L. J., & Bouis, H. E. (1991). The Impact of Nutritional Status on Agricultural Productivity: Wage Evidence from the Philippines. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 1(53), 45–68.

⁵⁶ Campino A.C.C; M. C. A. C. W. L. M. F. M. S. (2004). Health, Human Capital and Economic Growth in Brazil. In Sao Paulo.

⁵⁷ Louis-jacques, P. R. (2023). Investigating The Impact of Human Capital Development on Brazil's Economic Growth. *International Journal of Innovation Scientific Research and Review*, 05 October, 5315–5319.

Summit in Brazil on November 18, 2024, is a significant step toward the Indonesian government's priority program. Furthermore, the MBG program immediately received support from other countries for its implementation, including Brazil, China, the United States, and France. However, this MBG program is not a new concept, as many countries have successfully implemented it. Currently, 98 countries have joined the School Meals Coalition, chaired by Brazil, which aims to improve and expand the MBG program to ensure that every child receives healthy and nutritious food at school by 2030.

D. CONCLUSION

MBG is a government program that aligns with the principles of Islamic philanthropy. In its implementation, the MBG program prioritises the spirit of human capital development (insaniyah) as outlined by maqashid al-syariah and taught by the Qur'an. There is not a single MBG program that contradicts the spirit of sharia economics in developing insaniyah as instructed by the Qur'an. Even world religions other than Islam share the same spirit in viewing human capital development, namely an obligation that must be fulfilled so that human life can continue according to its nature, which is characterised by physical and spiritual health.

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