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Analysis of the Head of the Nutrition Service Unit and its Impact on Service Quality Free Nutritional Meal Program

Argon Gusto¹, Suarni Norawati², Zulher Zulher³, Abshor Marantika⁴¹Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Bangkinang, Indonesia, argon.gusto@gmail.com²Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Bangkinang, Indonesia, suarninorawati@pascabangkinang.ac.id³Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Bangkinang, Indonesia, zulher@stiebangkinang.ac.id⁴Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Bangkinang, Indonesia, abshormarantikabkn@stiebangkinang.ac.idCorresponding Author: argon.gusto@gmail.com¹

Abstract: This research is motivated by the importance of leadership of the Head of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) in improving the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) in Bangkinang City. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of leadership of the Head of SPPG, the quality of MBG Program services, and to analyze the influence of leadership on service quality. The study used a quantitative method with an associative approach. The study population was 548 people consisting of 151 Person in Charge (PIC) and 397 volunteers, while a sample of 85 respondents was determined using the Slovin formula with a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The data used included primary data obtained through questionnaires and secondary data derived from documents and related literature. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive analysis, validity tests, reliability tests, simple linear regression, t-tests, and coefficients of determination with the help of SPSS. The results of the study indicate that the leadership of the SPPG Head and the quality of MBG Program services are in the good category. Furthermore, the leadership of the SPPG Head has been shown to have a positive and significant influence on the quality of Free Nutritional Meal Program services. This finding indicates that the better the leadership implemented, the higher the quality of services provided to beneficiaries. Therefore, strengthening leadership is a crucial factor in supporting the successful implementation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program in Bangkinang City.

Keywords: Leadership, Head of SPPG, Service Quality, Free Nutritional Meal Program

INTRODUCTION

The Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) is a strategic government policy to improve the quality of human resources by meeting nutritional needs, especially for school-aged children, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and vulnerable groups. This program is directed at improving the nutritional status of the community, reducing stunting, strengthening food security, and supporting the formation of a healthy and productive generation. The success of MBG depends not only on the budget and supporting facilities, but also on the quality of services provided by the implementing organization to the beneficiaries. Service quality is a key indicator of successful public service delivery. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1988)

define service quality through five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In the implementation of MBG, service quality is reflected, among other things, in the accuracy of distribution, service reliability, staff responsiveness, service assurance, and attention to beneficiary needs.

The quality of MBG services is closely related to the leadership of the Head of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG). The Head of the SPPG is responsible for managing human resources, coordinating operational activities, overseeing food distribution, ensuring food safety, and ensuring timely and targeted service delivery. Robbins and Judge (2022) emphasize that effective leaders are able to build vision, motivation, communication, and a conducive work environment. While Yukl (2020) emphasizes the role of leadership in decision-making, coordination, supervision, and empowerment of human resources.

The importance of leadership is increasingly evident in the extensive scope of the MBG Program in Bangkinang City. In 2026, there were 11 SPPGs supported by 151 PICs and 397 volunteers to serve 19,410 beneficiaries. Each SPPG served an average of 1,765 beneficiaries, supported by approximately 14 PICs and 36 volunteers. This situation requires the Head of SPPG to be able to coordinate personnel, conduct supervision, build communication, and make quick decisions to ensure services run according to standards. However, initial observations indicate that there are still problems such as a lack of synchronization of information between officers, uneven supervision of volunteers, communication constraints, demands for quick decision-making, and differences in personnel motivation. These conditions indicate that the leadership function of the Head of SPPG still faces challenges in managing complex service activities.

The results of a pre-survey of 20 beneficiaries reinforced this phenomenon. 45% of respondents assessed that staff coordination was inadequate, 50% assessed that service information was not conveyed clearly, 55% assessed that the Head of the SPPG was not quick enough to make decisions when problems arose, and 60% stated that public complaints were not responded to promptly. Regarding service quality, 55% of respondents stated that food was not always received on time, and 60% assessed that staff did not respond quickly enough to questions or complaints. These findings indicate ongoing leadership issues that coexist with suboptimal aspects of MBG service quality.

Previous research also shows inconsistent results. Suryani and Nugroho (2022), Pratama (2023), and Rahmawati and Hidayat (2024) found that leadership positively influences the quality of public services. Conversely, Arifin (2022) found that the influence of leadership on service quality is indirect, while Lestari (2023) showed that human resource competence and the availability of facilities are more dominant than leadership. These differences indicate a research gap regarding the influence of leadership on service quality.

Furthermore, previous research has focused primarily on the licensing, health, education, and government administration sectors, while research on the leadership of SPPG Heads in implementing MBG is still limited. MBG, however, has complex service characteristics, involving nutrition management, food distribution, food safety, coordination between PICs and volunteers, and direct service to a large number of beneficiaries. This creates a contextual gap and provides new research opportunities to examine the relationship between leadership and service quality in the MBG Program.

Based on the empirical phenomena and research gaps, a study is needed to obtain empirical evidence regarding the extent to which the leadership of the SPPG Head contributes to the quality of service. Therefore, the problems in this study can be formulated as follows: 1) how is the leadership of the SPPG Head and the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service; 2) does the leadership of the SPPG Head have a significant effect on the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service; and 3) how much does the leadership of the SPPG Head contribute to the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service. Meanwhile, the objectives of this study are: 1) to analyze how the leadership of the SPPG Head and the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service; 2) to analyze how the leadership of the SPPG Head influences the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service; and 3) to analyze

how much the leadership of the SPPG Head contributes to the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service.

Leadership is a crucial factor in determining the success of an organization, particularly public organizations responsible for providing services to the public. Robbins and Judge (2017) define leadership as the ability to influence a group to achieve established goals. Meanwhile, Yukl (2013) views leadership as the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it, while facilitating individual and group efforts to achieve shared goals. In public organizations, leadership is not only related to the ability to direct subordinates, but also demands accountability, transparency, and an orientation toward the public interest. In the context of this research, the leadership of the Head of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) is understood as the leader's ability to manage the operational activities of nutrition services, coordinate resources, and ensure the implementation of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) is effective, efficient, and on target.

The leadership of the SPPG Head can also be explained through the transformational leadership approach developed by Bass (1985) and Avolio (1994). This approach emphasizes that effective leaders are able to inspire and transform organizational members to achieve higher performance through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the implementation of MBG, these characteristics are necessary because the SPPG Head not only carries out administrative functions but also must be able to build commitment, provide motivation, encourage problem solving, and direct operational staff to provide optimal service to beneficiaries.

In addition to the transformational approach, transactional and situational leadership are also relevant to this research. Transactional leadership emphasizes work standards, performance-based supervision, and reward and sanction mechanisms to maintain discipline and adherence to procedures. Meanwhile, Hersey and Blanchard's situational approach emphasizes the need to adapt leadership style to the conditions of subordinates and the organizational situation through directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating. Both approaches are relevant for SPPG Heads because implementing MBG requires adherence to service standards as well as the ability to adapt leadership actions to operational dynamics.

Based on the synthesis of these theories, the leadership of the Head of SPPG in this study was measured through five indicators: communication, decision-making, motivation, coordination, and supervision. Communication is necessary to ensure that information and instructions are understood by all personnel; decision-making relates to the ability to determine appropriate actions to address operational issues; motivation demonstrates the ability to foster enthusiasm and commitment among members; coordination is necessary to align tasks and activities; and supervision ensures that service delivery meets established standards. These five indicators reflect the leadership functions required in managing MBG services.

The success of leadership in a public service organization is ultimately reflected in the quality of service received by the public. Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry (1988) define service quality as the level of expected service excellence and the organization's ability to control that level of excellence to meet the needs of service users. Service quality is fundamentally related to the match between user expectations and perceptions of the service received. In public organizations, service quality is an important indicator because it reflects the organization's ability to meet public needs and demonstrates the successful implementation of public service functions.

The service quality in this study refers to the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which includes five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles relate to physical facilities, equipment, and the appearance of staff; reliability indicates the ability to provide services accurately, consistently, and according to standards; responsiveness describes the willingness and speed of staff in assisting beneficiaries; assurance relates to staff competence and the ability to provide a sense of security and trust; while empathy reflects attention and concern for the needs of service recipients. In MBG services, these five dimensions can be reflected through

the condition of service facilities, the consistency of quality and accuracy of food distribution, the speed of response to problems, the assurance of food safety, and attention to the needs of beneficiaries.

Leadership and service quality are closely related because an organization's ability to provide services is greatly influenced by how leaders manage resources and service processes. Effective leadership can direct organizational resources to produce quality services, while weaknesses in coordination, supervision, and motivation can hinder service quality. In the context of SPPG, the SPPG Head's ability to communicate, make decisions, motivate, coordinate, and supervise the implementation of activities will determine the service unit's ability to provide MBG services that are fast, accurate, consistent, safe, and appropriate to the needs of beneficiaries.

This relationship is supported by previous research. Sutrisno (2021) found that leadership has a positive and significant effect on the quality of public services because effective leadership can improve coordination, discipline, and consistency of service delivery. Rahman (2020) showed that leaders with vision and managerial skills can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Meanwhile, Putri and Hadi (2023) found that leadership plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of nutrition programs, particularly through cross-sector coordination, resource management, and program implementation oversight. These findings demonstrate that a leader's ability to manage an organization has consequences for the quality of the resulting service process.

Other research findings also strengthen this relationship. Suryani and Nugroho (2022) showed that leadership has a positive and significant effect on the quality of public services in local government agencies. Pratama (2023) found that transformational leadership improves service quality by increasing employee motivation and performance. Rahmawati and Hidayat (2024) showed that a leader's ability to coordinate, supervise, and empower human resources influences the quality of public services. Similarly, Lumaya et al. (2024), Maharudin (2021), Amir et al. (2021), Laksana (2024), and Artaningsih et al. (2023) demonstrated that leadership plays a role in improving service quality, organizational performance, and public satisfaction.

Nevertheless, previous research still leaves room for development. Previous studies have focused more on leadership and service quality within the context of government agencies, health services, and public organizations in general. Meanwhile, studies specifically focusing on SPPG as the organization implementing nutrition services through the MBG Program are still relatively limited. Chapter II also shows that many previous studies have examined the relationship between variables partially and have not been conducted in the context of nutrition fulfillment programs. This situation indicates a contextual research gap, namely the need to re-examine the relationship between leadership and service quality within different service organization characteristics.

The SPPG context is important because MBG services have operational characteristics that require resource coordination, food management, service quality monitoring, distribution accuracy, and interaction with beneficiaries. Given these characteristics, service quality is determined not only by the technical skills of staff but also by the ability of the SPPG Head to integrate all resources and work processes. This study therefore positions the leadership of the SPPG Head as a factor suspected of explaining variations in MBG Program service quality in Bangkinang City. This position also provides a different empirical context from most previous research.

Conceptually, the relationship between the two variables is based on the idea that the more effectively the Head of SPPG carries out the functions of communication, decision-making, motivation, coordination, and supervision, the better the organization's ability to produce services that meet the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Thus, theoretically and empirically, it explains that effective leadership will improve the organization's ability to provide services quickly, accurately, responsively, and in accordance with community needs. Conversely, suboptimal leadership functions have the potential to reduce the quality of services received by MBG Program beneficiaries.

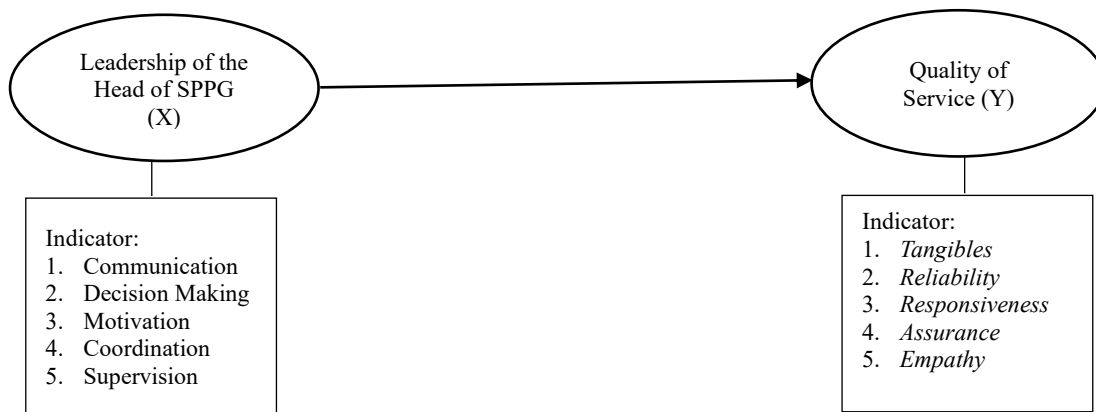


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Research

Based on the theoretical basis, previous research, and conceptual framework, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: The leadership of the Head of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) has a positive and significant influence on the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) services.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with an explanatory associative design. The quantitative approach was used because the variables were measured using structured instruments, and the data were analyzed statistically to test the research hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2023). The study was conducted at the SPPG (Vocational Training Center for the Empowerment of Children) in Bangkinang City, Kampar Regency. The study population consisted of all personnel directly involved in the implementation of the MBG Program in Bangkinang City, consisting of 151 Person in Charge (PIC) and 397 volunteers, resulting in a total population of 548 people. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 10% error rate, resulting in 85 respondents. The sample was then determined using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of each group, namely 23 PICs and 62 volunteers.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires, observations, and unstructured interviews, while secondary data were obtained through documentation in the form of data on the number of SPPGs, PICs, volunteers, beneficiaries, organizational structure, activity reports, and guidelines for implementing the MBG Program. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) through descriptive analysis and inference. The relationship between variables was tested using simple linear regression with a model:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \varepsilon$$

Where Y is the service quality of the MBG Program, X is the leadership of the Head of SPPG, α is a constant, β is the regression coefficient, and ε is the error term. Hypothesis testing was conducted at 5% alpha. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (r^2) was used to determine the extent of the leadership ability of the Head of SPPG in explaining variations in the service quality of the MBG Program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show the characteristics of respondents as in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondent Identity

No	Respondent Identity	Frequency (People)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Man	47
		Woman	38
2	Age	Less Than 25 Years old	26
		25-40 Years	47
		Over 40 Years	12
3	Level of Education	Juior High School	14
		Seior High School	22
		Diploma	25
		Bachelor	24
4	Status in the MBG Program	<i>Person in Charge</i> (PIC)	23
		Beneficiaries	62
5	Length of Involvement in MBG Program	Less than 5 Months	30
		5-12 Months	39
		Over 12 Months	16

Source: Data Processing Results

In general, the characteristics of the respondents indicate that they have diverse backgrounds and sufficient experience in assessing the leadership of the SPPG Head and the quality of MBG Program services. The next stage of analysis was to conduct descriptive statistical analysis of the research variables (SPPG leadership and service quality), and the results obtained are as in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Descriptive Analysis Results

Variables	Average	TCR (%)	Category	Highest Indicator	Mean	Lowest Indicator	Mean
Leadership of the Head of SPPG	3,59	71,88	Good	Motivating staff	3,91	Delivery of program information	3,31
MBG Service Quality	3,62	72,31	Good	Friendly and polite staff	3,86	Feeding according to schedule	3,39

Source: Research Results

These results indicate that the Head of SPPG has generally been able to carry out leadership functions in directing the implementation of the MBG Program, especially through motivation, supervision, coordination, decision-making, communication, and teamwork. The indicator with the highest score is the Head of SPPG's ability to motivate staff to work better with an average of 3.91, while the lowest score is the ability to convey program information clearly to staff with an average of 3.31. These findings show that motivation is the main strength of leadership, while internal communication is still an aspect that needs to be improved.

The descriptive analysis of service quality variables indicates that the services provided by SPPG have generally been able to meet the needs of beneficiaries, both in terms of physical evidence, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The indicator with the highest score was the friendly and polite attitude of officers with an average of 3.86, followed by officers' knowledge of nutritional services at 3.79 and attention to beneficiary needs at 3.75. Conversely, the indicator with the lowest score was the accuracy of food delivery according to schedule with an average of 3.39, followed by the speed of officers responding to beneficiary needs at 3.41. These findings indicate that the strength of MBG services lies in the human resources aspect, specifically the friendliness, competence, and concern of officers for beneficiaries. However, the dimensions of reliability and responsiveness still require attention, especially regarding the timeliness of distribution and the speed of responding to beneficiary needs. Delays in service can reduce the effectiveness of the program because providing food

to beneficiaries is related to their schedules and activities. Therefore, quality service requires not only competent and beneficiary-oriented officers, but also an operational system capable of ensuring the timeliness and speed of service.

Prior to hypothesis testing, the quality of the research instruments was tested through validity and reliability. The test results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Validity and Reliability Test Results

No	Variables	Number of Valid Statements	Cronbach's Alpha	Cut-Off	Information
1	Leadership of the Head of SPPG	10	0.868	0,70	Reliable
2	MBG Service Quality	10	0.832	0,70	Reliable

Source: Data Processing Results

The validity test results show that the significance value of the product moment correlation test is below 0.05, so all items are suitable for measuring the research constructs. Then, a reliability test was conducted, where all instruments have good internal consistency. The SPPG leadership variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.868, while the service quality variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.832. Both values are above the cut-off value of 0.70, so the instruments for both variables are declared reliable. Next, the normality test through the Normal P-P Plot obtained results as in Figure 2. Furthermore, from Figure 2, the results of the normality test through the Normal P-P Plot of standardized residual regression show that the residual points spread around and follow the diagonal line, so the residuals are declared normally distributed and the model meets the normality assumption to continue with the regression test.

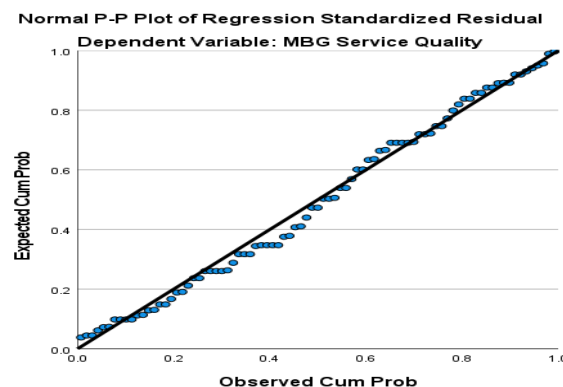


Figure 2. Normality Test Results

Source: Data Processing Results

Furthermore, the results of simple linear regression testing and the results of hypothesis testing can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Results

No	Variables	Coefficient	t test	Sig	r and r2
1	Constant	28.827	-	-	0,849
2	MBG Service Quality	0.204	3,344	0,002	& 0,721

Source: Data Processing Results

From Table 4, the constant (α) is 28.827 and the regression coefficient (β) is 0.204, so that the simple linear regression equation can be formulated as $Y = 28.827 + 0.204 X$. The leadership regression coefficient of 0.204 indicates a positive direction of influence, which means that every one unit increase in the leadership of the SPPG Head is followed by an increase in service quality of 0.204 units, with other factors considered constant. Thus, an increase in the effectiveness of the SPPG Head's leadership will be followed by an increase in the quality of MBG Program services.

Hypothesis testing yielded a t-value of 3.344 with a significance level of $0.002 < 0.05$, thus the research hypothesis was accepted. This means that the leadership of the SPPG Head has a positive and significant effect on the quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program service in Bangkinang Kota District. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.849 indicates a very strong relationship between leadership and service quality. Meanwhile, the determination coefficient (r^2) of 0.721 indicates that 72.1% of the variation in service quality can be explained by the leadership of the SPPG Head, while the remaining 27.9% is influenced by factors outside the research model, such as officer competence, facilities and infrastructure, operational systems, organizational culture, internal communication, and work motivation.

Substantively, this significant contribution demonstrates that leadership is a crucial element in shaping the quality of MBG services. The MBG program is characterized by services that require intensive coordination, as the service process extends beyond providing food, but also involves procuring materials, processing, quality control, staffing, and distribution to beneficiaries. Under these circumstances, the Head of the SPPG plays a key role in ensuring the entire process operates as a unified service system. The more effective the leader is in directing team members, building communication, motivating, coordinating work, and supervising, the greater the chance of achieving consistent, high-quality service.

The research findings support the views of Robbins and Judge (2017) and Yukl (2013) that leadership is the process of influencing and directing individuals and groups to work toward organizational goals. In the context of SPPG, the Head of SPPG not only performs administrative functions but also plays a role in integrating various resources to ensure effective MBG services. Therefore, the quality of service received by beneficiaries is a manifestation of leadership effectiveness in managing the organization and service processes.

When linked to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's (1988) SERVQUAL, the influence of leadership on service quality can be reflected in five service dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The research results show that service strength lies in the empathy dimension, particularly the friendliness and politeness of staff, while relative weakness lies in the timeliness of service. This indicates that leadership needs not only to maintain a friendly and beneficiary-oriented service culture but also to strengthen supervision, coordination, and operational management to improve service reliability.

Empirically, the research findings are consistent with Sutrisno (2021), who found that leadership positively impacts the quality of public services by improving coordination, discipline, and consistency. These findings also support Rahman (2020), who stated that leadership can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, and Kurniawan (2020), who demonstrated that responsive leaders play a role in improving the speed and accuracy of services. In the context of nutrition services, the research findings align with Putri and Hadi (2023), who position leadership as a strategic factor in program success through resource coordination, oversight, and organizational management at the local level.

Thus, the research results provide empirical evidence that the leadership of the Head of SPPG is an important determinant of the quality of MBG Program services in Bangkinang Kota District. The main findings of the study not only lie in the positive and significant influence with a contribution of 72.1%, but also indicate managerial areas that need to be strengthened. Motivation, supervision, coordination, competence, and service attitude are strengths that need to be maintained, while internal communication, timeliness of distribution, and speed of response to beneficiary needs are aspects that still need to be improved. Strengthening these aspects is crucial so that leadership effectiveness can be translated more optimally into reliable, responsive, safe, and beneficiary-oriented MBG services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The leadership of the Head of the Nutrition Fulfillment Service Unit (SPPG) in Bangkinang City is in the good category, indicating that communication, coordination, decision-making,

- motivation, and oversight have been running quite effectively. However, internal communication aspects still need to be improved to support more optimal coordination of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG).
2. The service quality of the Free Nutritional Meal Program (MBG) in Bangkinang City is also considered good. However, aspects such as the timeliness of food distribution and the speed of responding to beneficiary needs still require improvement to optimize service quality.
 3. The leadership of the SPPG Head has a positive and significant impact on the quality of MBG Program services. This indicates that the more effectively the SPPG Head carries out his or her leadership function, the better the quality of services received by beneficiaries.
 4. The leadership of the SPPG Head contributed 72.1% to the quality of MBG Program services, while the remaining 27.9% was influenced by factors outside the study. This finding confirms that leadership is a strategic factor in improving the quality of Free Nutritional Meal Program services in Bangkinang City.

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