

INSIGHTS INTO PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM: A STUDY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Poverty and hunger is a multi-dimensional concept. Every third poor person in the world is an Indian. The British government implemented a rationing system in India during the Second World War. Public Distribution System (PDS) is a system of distributing food grains and other essential items to poor segment of society at subsidized prices. The central and state governments are responsible for the operation of public distribution system. The central government purchases stocks while state government lift the food grains and distribute it to the retail PDS outlets. The study has been carried at four districts of Himachal Pradesh. Multistage random sampling has been used and responses obtained from the targeted BPL families. This paper traces the awareness level and satisfaction level of beneficiaries regarding public distribution system.

Keywords: Public Distribution System, Food Grains, Stocks, Awareness, Satisfaction.

Introduction

Public Distribution System (PDS) means a system undertaken by the government to distribution of necessities for the general public. It is a food security system in India and it refers to the process of distributing essential food grains to people. PDS is a method of distributing essential commodities to the weaker segment of the society at a low cost, under the authority of government departments and organisations, to shield them from the market's extreme high costs. In India, rationing system was introduced at the time of Second World War by the British Government. It provides an essential link between the producers and consumers by making available goods and services at the right place, at the right time, and at the right price. The British government terminated the rationing system after the war in 1943. In 1950, the government restored the rationing system to provide food grains at reduced costs following independence. It was referred to as the National Food Security System (NFSS). The Food Corporation of India was founded by the Indian government to strengthen the PDS.

Many government departments, corporations, and agencies are working together to ensure that the PDS runs smoothly and efficiently, ensuring that it is a huge success. To address some systemic problems in the current PDS, a modified program called as the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced in 1997. Following the failure of the previous PDS, the primary focus of the TPDS shifted to delivering essential food items to the poor who fell below the poverty line in all areas of the

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country, as well as keeping food subsidies under control. The distribution of food commodities by the government has become a defining feature of developing economies. Currently, India's Public Distribution System consists of a large network of more than 5,35,000 ration outlets.

Literature Review

Present study tries to find the awareness level and satisfaction level of beneficiaries towards public distribution system in achieving the objectives of food security. **Diksha and Kaushik (2017)** in their study "Awareness of Beneficiaries Regarding Public Distribution System/Food Security Bill" revealed that majority of respondents had medium level awareness regarding objectives, commodities available and mandatory display information. **Velmurugan and Lavanya (2017)** found that the general public will be satisfied when they could obtain goods from the PDS in all months, goods are supplied with accurate weight and accurate staff members are employed, fair price shops should be located at easily accessible place, distribution of variety of goods, supply of goods in time, goods supplied at PDS are fit for consumption, fair price shops are to be opened in accurate time, staff members of PDS should not insist the general public to buy unnecessary goods, PDS employees should redress the general public grievance at the earliest. **Kumar and Bhushan (2017)** in their study titled "A Study of Public Distribution System in Himachal Pradesh" found that the respondents are not satisfied with the quality of food grains supplied through PDS. Also people face hardship on account of non-availability of ration in fair price shops as and when needed. **Arora and Singh (2018)** in their study on title "Public distribution System and food Security in India: A case study of Uttarakhand" assessed the impact of PDS on Food Security. The findings indicated that PDS able to bring the changes like nutritional enhancement and poverty reduction. Digitalization of all records and transformation seems to be a welcome move by the government. Study analysed data on the basis of economic status where maximum respondents were from BPL and it was certain irregularities. **Baksh (2020)** concluded that family cardholders prefer to acquire goods on fair price shops only when the goods are available at right time, right quantity and quality. Nevertheless, the cardholder's face various obstacles like, over crowd at fair price shops, public have to wait two to three hours for receiving goods from fair price shops, distribution of old goods, exorbitant delay in distribution of goods by staff members at PDS and paucity of stock at fair price shops.

Research Objectives

- To study the awareness level of beneficiaries regarding Public Distribution System
- To study the satisfaction level of beneficiaries regarding Public Distribution System

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in awareness level of respondents towards PDS based on various demographic factors.
- H_{A1}:** There is a significant difference in awareness level of respondents towards PDS based on various demographic factors.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in satisfaction level of respondents towards PDS based on various demographic factors.
- H_{A2}:** There is a significant difference in satisfaction level of respondents towards PDS based on various demographic factors.

Research Methodology

This study is an empirical one in which the analysis has been done based on primary data. The primary data was collected through well-structured questionnaires. The questionnaires considered for the analysis are demographic profile of the respondents. This study is confined to four districts of Himachal Pradesh. The selected sample size is based on random sampling technique. The data analysed the demographic profiles of the respondents by using one-way ANOVA.

Results and Discussions

This section deals with the awareness level and satisfaction level of beneficiaries about public distribution system. The responses of respondents were recorded and analysis of the results is presented below.

Awareness Level of Beneficiaries Regarding Public Distribution System

To know whether there is a significant difference between awareness level of respondents toward Public Distribution System and various demographic factors, the hypotheses had been tested with the help of ANOVA at 5% significance level. The results of the analysis are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean Awareness Level and ANOVA value towards Public Distribution System

S. No.	Demographic Variables		N	Mean	S.D	F Value	Significance	Result
1	District	Kangra	120	3.27	0.589	27.714	0.000*	Null Hypothesis Rejected
		Chamba	139	3.53	0.656			
		Mandi	144	3.86	0.561			
		Shimla	147	3.86	0.663			
2	Age	15-30 years	47	3.69	0.703	0.090	0.966	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		31-45 years	159	3.66	0.660			
		46-60 years	200	3.64	0.701			
		61year& above	144	3.64	0.607			
3	Marital Status	Married	423	3.67	0.655	1.242	0.290	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Unmarried	65	3.65	0.704			
		Widow/widower	62	3.53	0.676			
4	Gender	Male	356	3.73	0.657	0.108	0.742	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Female	194	3.50	0.651			
5	Income	Upto 10000	146	3.76	0.676	2.716	0.044*	Null Hypothesis Rejected
		10k-20k	192	3.56	0.668			
		20k-30k	144	3.63	0.645			
		30k-40k	68	3.69	0.640			
6	Education Level	Below Matric	179	3.69	0.632	2.426	0.065	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Matric	151	3.57	0.655			
		Plus Two	143	3.60	0.679			
		Graduation& Above	77	3.80	0.705			
7	Category	General	355	3.70	.664	2.853	0.37	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		SC	143	3.59	.694			
		ST	39	3.48	.561			
		OBC	13	3.36	.419			
8	Type of Family	Nuclear	358	3.60	0.680	2.665	0.103	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Joint	192	3.74	0.624			
9	Type of Dwelling	Cemented	256	3.58	.684	3.367	0.35	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Non-cemented	201	3.74	.657			
		Temporary Hut	93	3.66	.605			

Source: Primary Data

*Significant at 5% level

Mean awareness level of respondents towards PDS residing in Mandi district and Shimla district is same and highest i.e., 3.86 highest followed by respondents of Chamba district (3.53) and Kangra district (3.27). Mean awareness level of respondents towards PDS between the age group 15-30 years and 31-45 years are 3.69 and 3.66 respectively. Respondents between the age group 46-60 years and 61 years and above have mean value 3.64 each. Mean awareness level of married respondents towards PDS is high (3.67), followed by unmarried person (3.65) and widow/widower (3.53). Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents on the basis of gender is high in males (3.73) and low in females (3.50). Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents on the basis of their income level is highest (3.76) in low-income respondents with annual income below Rs.10000, followed by high-income respondents with annual income between Rs.30000- Rs.40000 is 3.69, followed by medium-income respondents with annual income between Rs.20000- Rs.30000 is 3.63. Mean awareness level of respondents between income ranges Rs.10000- Rs.20000 is 3.56. It reflects that lower income group is more aware about PDS. Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents on the basis of education level is high in graduate and above (3.80), followed by respondents who not complete even their metric (3.69), followed by intermediate (3.60) and metric (3.57). This indicated that graduate respondents are more aware about PDS and non-graduate respondents are least aware. Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents belongs to general category and scheduled caste is highest and is 3.70 and 3.59 respectively, followed by respondents of scheduled tribe (3.48) and other backward classes (3.36). This

shows that respondents belonging to general category and scheduled caste category are more aware about PDS followed by respondents of scheduled tribe and respondents of other backward classes. Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents residing in joint family is high (3.74) and those respondents who reside in nuclear family is low (3.60). Mean awareness level towards PDS of respondents living in non-cemented house is highest (3.74) followed by temporary huts (3.66) and cemented house (3.58). It indicates that respondents of non-cemented house are more aware about PDS as compared with house and temporary huts.

Satisfaction Level of Beneficiaries Regarding Public Distribution System

To know whether there is a significant difference between satisfaction level of respondents toward Public Distribution System and various demographic factors, the hypotheses had been tested with the help of ANOVA at 5% significance level. The results of the analysis are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Mean Satisfaction Level and ANOVA value towards Public Distribution System

S. No.	Demographic Variables	N	Mean	S.D	F Value	Significance	Result	
1	District	Kangra	120	3.29	0.416	2.247	0.082	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Chamba	139	3.19	0.497			
		Mandi	144	3.26	0.386			
		Shimla	147	3.32	0.404			
2	Age	15-30 years	47	3.31	0.381	0.759	0.517	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		31-45 years	159	3.29	0.459			
		46-60 years	200	3.26	0.417			
		61year& above	144	3.23	0.427			
3	Marital Status	Married	423	3.27	0.431	0.002	0.998	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Unmarried	65	3.27	0.469			
		Widow/widower	62	3.27	0.377			
4	Gender	Male	356	3.32	0.405	2.001	0.158	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Female	194	3.16	0.454			
5	Income	Upto 10000	146	3.34	0.401	5.734	0.001*	Null Hypothesis Rejected
		10k-20k	192	3.20	0.453			
		20k-30k	144	3.33	0.437			
		30k-40k	68	3.15	0.348			
6	Education Level	Below Matric	179	3.26	0.435	1.973	0.117	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Matric	151	3.31	0.429			
		Plus Two	143	3.28	0.426			
		Graduation& Above	77	3.17	0.411			
7	Category	General	355	3.24	0.420	4.715	0.003*	Null Hypothesis Rejected
		SC	143	3.29	0.441			
		ST	39	3.23	0.357			
		OBC	13	3.68	0.534			
8	Type of Family	Nuclear	358	3.28	0.473	22.389	0.000*	Null Hypothesis Rejected
		Joint	192	3.24	0.331			
9	Type of Dwelling	Cemented	256	3.25	0.440	0.543	0.581	Null Hypothesis Accepted
		Non-cemented	201	3.29	0.402			
		Temporary Hut	93	3.26	0.456			

Source: Primary Data
* Significant at 5% level

Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents residing in Shimla district (3.32) and Kangra district (3.29) is highest. Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents between the age group 15-30 years and 31-45 years is 3.31 and 3.29 respectively. Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents on the basis of gender is high in males (3.32) and low in females (3.16). Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents on the basis of their income level is highest (3.34) in low-income respondents with annual income below Rs.10000. Mean satisfaction level towards PDS on the basis of

education level is highest in respondents whose qualification is matric (3.31), further at the second level mean satisfaction level is (3.28) among the respondents whose qualification is plus two. However, respondents whose qualification is below matric, they stand at the third level (3.26) and respondents who hold graduation degree stand last one (3.17) of the table. Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents belongs to OBC category and SC category is highest and is 3.68 and 3.29 respectively, followed by respondents of general category (3.24) and respondents of ST category (3.23). Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents living in nuclear family is high (3.28) and those respondents living in joint family is low (3.24). Mean satisfaction level towards PDS of respondents living in non-cemented house is highest (3.29) followed by respondents of temporary huts (3.26) and respondents of cemented house (3.25).

Conclusion

Beneficiaries are fairly aware about public distribution system. Younger respondents, low family income respondents, respondents of joint family are more aware and aged respondents, high family income respondents, respondents of nuclear family are least aware about public distribution system. Nuclear family male respondents living in non-cemented house having lower income are more satisfied about public distribution system. While female respondents having high income living in cemented house are least satisfied about public distribution system. In order to aware the more beneficiaries, there must be more role of local Government and administration.

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