



PERFORMANCE OF FAIR PRICE SHOPS IN DISTRICT SIRMOUR OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

¹Ritu Verma and ²Shanta Kumari

¹Ph.D. Scholar, ²Associate Professor in Economics

Department of Economics, Eternal University, Baru Sahib, India

Abstract: The public distribution system (PDS) is a great way to secure the food security of the poor people of the country. In the study PDS system of Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh has evaluated based on the factors like food sufficiency, current system of fair price shops (FPSs), attitude of FPSs dealers, and quality of PDS food. The primary data of 200 families were collected by structured schedule through random sampling technique. The results were measured through no. of beneficiaries & their percentages. The Chi-square test was also used to examine the relationship between responses of beneficiaries and functioning of fair price shops. The study found that majority of the beneficiaries were satisfied with the quality of the food, attitude of fair price shops dealers & the opening and closing time of FPSs. While, they were dissatisfied with quantity of PDS food & long distance of the FPSs from their residence. The study suggested that authorities concerned should provide PDS ration according to the family member of the beneficiary and FPSs should be established on the village level instead of panchayat. Hence, all the beneficiaries will be able to avail sufficient food with in the village. This will help to enhance & maintain their nutritional and balanced diet.

Keywords- Public Distribution System, Beneficiaries, Fair Price Shops

1. INTRODUCTION

Food security remains a serious problem in underdeveloped and developing countries till today. To provide balanced nutritious diet to all the needy poor people is a major challenge in front of the government. Government, related organizations and civil societies need to work together on this challenge to provide sufficient nutritious food to the targeted population. However, public distribution system (PDS) has played a crucial role in the field of food security as PDS has been working on this problem for more than 5 decades. Even after India has achieved food self-sufficiency poverty remained a major challenge. Due to this, large numbers of people in India are still underweight, underdeveloped and malnourished. The functioning of PDS is not uniform in all countries. (Rajkumar, 2013). PDS operation and access depends on the policies of the government. Consumption of PDS foodgrains increased from 4.58 to 9.56 kg per family per month from 1993 to 2011. Currently it covers 552 million people (Basu and Das, 2015). Food security remains a complex problem due to inefficiencies, corruption found in its food system which has failed to provide food services to target poor people. To remove these obstacles, some significant steps were taken by government such as adoption of computerized system and list of beneficiaries should be updated timely. As a result, the diversion reduced from 54 per cent in 2004 to 41.7 per cent in 2011 (¹Basu & Das 2015; ²Dreze & Khera, 2015). Computerized system bring more people under its coverage which directly increasing the beneficiary's satisfaction. Through this, poor families are given more food security which increases the effectiveness of PDS (Arora et al., 2018). Prior to TPDS, all cardholders were purchasing food grains at a fixed quantity at an affordable price from fair price shop. After the TPDS, different amount of food grains were fixed for APL, BPL and Antyodaya cardholders by the government (Kishore and Chakrabarti, 2015). Parliament of India passed the National Food Security Act in 2013, whose main objective is to provide food grains at an affordable price to about two-third of the population of India (Sandhu, 2015). The National Food Security act enacted to strengthen the food security system. Food security is a situation in which nutritious and adequate amount of food is available to everyone at all the time (George and Mckay, 2019). The

study was carry out to know the performance of public distribution system in Sirmour district. The study on this aspect is lacking in this area. Therefore, the study is helpful to fill this gap as well as also helpful to suggest appropriate policy measures.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-economic status of beneficiaries
2. To analyse the performance of public distribution system in Sirmour district

2. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary data. Multi- stage random sampling technique was adopted to achieve the determined objectives of PDS. The primary survey was conducted in the Sirmour region, the southern district of Himachal Pradesh. Out of 6 blocks of Sirmour, random selection of 4 blocks followed by the selection of 5 FPSs from each block. Finally, 5 BPL and 5 AAY selected randomly from each FPS of each block through equal allocation method. The results of the study were presented through percentages. The Chi- square test was also used to examine the relationship between responses of beneficiaries and functioning of fair price shops.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3.1: Demographic profile of sample household (Number)

Particulars	BPL	AAY	Total
I) Age Interval (Years)			
18-30	03 (3.00)	04 (4.00)	07 (3.50)
30-50	52 (52.00)	60 (60.00)	112 (56.00)
50-70	39 (39.00)	30 (30.00)	69 (34.50)
70 & above	06 (6.00)	06 (6.00)	12 (6.00)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
11) Educational level			
Illiterate	35 (35.00)	38 (38.00)	73 (36.50)
Primary	25 (25.00)	25 (25.00)	50 (25.00)
Middle	14 (14.00)	16 (16.00)	30 (15.00)
Matriculation	12 (12.00)	11 (11.00)	23 (11.50)
Senior secondary	12 (12.00)	09 (9.00)	21 (10.50)
Graduation	02 (2.00)	01 (1.00)	03 (1.50)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
III) Income (Rs per month)			
<3000	08 (8.00)	11 (11.00)	19 (9.50)
3000-5000	24 (24.00)	22 (22.00)	46 (23.00)
5000-7000	22 (22.00)	30 (30.00)	52 (26.00)
7000-9000	25 (25.00)	19 (19.00)	44 (22.00)

9000-11000	12 (12.00)	04 (4.00)	16 (8.00)
11000-13000	01 (1.00)	09 (9.00)	10 (5.00)
≥13000	08 (8.00)	05 (5.00)	13 (6.50)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Average income of population	1661.08	1624.27	1643.01

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage of respective total.

BPL- Below Poverty Line, AAY- Antyodaya Anna Yojana

The comprehensive information about traits of the households pertaining to age, education and income are presented in Table 3.1. The socio-demographic profile of sample households of BPL and AAY beneficiaries are presented in Table 3.1. The results revealed that at overall level majority of sample households (56%) were belong to 35-50 age groups. This indicated that beneficiaries lie in working age group. While just 6 per cent were belong the age of 70 & above. It implies that the minor beneficiaries were from non- working age groups. The beneficiaries category-wise analysis revealed that 60 per cent of AAY were in the age groups of 30-50 year followed by 52 per cent BPL beneficiaries in this age groups.

For the awareness of PDS the education level plays vital role which helps to utilize the rights of PDS facility. Among the beneficiaries, illiterate were 36.50 per cent out. Out of literate, primary (25%) followed by middle (15%), matriculation (11.50%), senior secondary (10.50%) and graduate (1.50%) beneficiaries. In case of AAY beneficiaries, 38 per cent were illiterate followed by primary (25%), middle (16%), matriculation (11%), senior secondary (9%) and graduate (1%). Majority of household were illiterate (35%) in BPL followed by followed by primary (25%), middle (14%), matriculation (12%), senior secondary (12%) and graduate (2%). Results of the table indicated the more than two- third of beneficiaries was illiterate in all which are not aware of their benefits received from PDS facility.

Table also revealed that level of monthly income of the beneficiaries. Among all the beneficiaries 26 per cent were having the income of Rs 5000-7000 which was followed by 23 per cent with family income of 3000-5000, 9.50 per cent were in the range of income of < 3000 per month and remaining were under the range of income of 7000-9000 (22%), 9000-11000 (8%), ≥ 13000 (6.5%) and 11000- 13000 (5%) per month. In case of BPL maximum income lie in the range of 7000-9000 i.e. (25%), followed by the 3000-5000 (24%), 5000-7000 (22%), 9000-11000 (12%), ≥ 13000 (8%) and 11000-13000 (1%). Majority (23%) of AAY households had the maximum income in the range of 5000-7000, followed by 3000-5000 (22%), 7000-9000 (19%), < 3000 (11%), 11000-13000 (9%), ≥ 13000 (8%) and 9000-11000 (4%). Average monthly income of BPL was Rs 1661.08 followed by all beneficiaries (Rs 1643.01) and AAY (Rs 1624.27) According to Rural Development Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh, The monthly income of BPL & AAY household should not exceed from Rs. 2500 (Anonymous, 2022). Therefore, the above figures indicated that economic status of BPL and AAY household is very poor in the study area.

Table 3.2: Sufficiency of ration through public distribution system (Number)

Particulars	BPL	AAY	Total
Sufficient	02 (2.00)	01 (1.00)	03 (1.50)
Not sufficient	98 (98.00)	99 (99.00)	197 (98.50)
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage of respective total.

BPL- Below poverty line, AAY- Antyodaya anna yojana

The results regarding ration sufficiency through PDS are given in Table 3.2. The perusal of the Table 3.2 revealed regarding the sufficiency of ration through public distribution system. From the above table it can be concluded that 98.50 per cent among all the beneficiaries, 98 per cent in BPL & 99 per cent in AAY felt that quantity of the ration supplied through PDS is not sufficient to meet the needs of family. Only few of them felt that quantity supplied is sufficient to meet the family needs. The result of the study has supported by the (Beura and Mishra, 2022). Therefore, in order to meet the requirement of the ration of the each member in a family. The govt. should provide ration according to the no. family members included in the ration card rather than entitlement of the ration on the basis of the individual ration card. The result of the study has supported by the (Beura and Mishra, 2022)

Table 3.3: Responses of beneficiaries regarding functioning of fair price shops (Number)

Particulars	BPL	AAY	Total	χ^2
I) Current system				
Good	72 (72.00)	78 (71.00)	150 (75.00)	1.50 ^{NS} P=0.47
Same as earlier	19 (19.00)	17 (17.00)	36 (18.00)	
Bad	09 (9.00)	05 (5.00)	14 (7.00)	
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)	
II) Behaviour of dealers				
Friendly	55 (55.00)	48 (48.00)	103 (51.50)	1.16 ^{NS} P=0.54
Polite	19 (19.00)	25 (25.00)	44 (22.00)	
Rude	26 (26.00)	27 (27.00)	53 (26.50)	
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)	
III) Distance of FPSs from their residence				
<1	10 (10.00)	06 (6.00)	16 (8.00)	8.38 ^{**} P=0.02
1-4	75 (75.00)	62 (62.00)	137 (68.50)	
4 & above	15 (15.00)	32 (32.00)	47 (23.50)	
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)	
IV) Opening & closing hours				
Yes	77	72	149	

	(77.00)	(100.00)	(74.50)	
No	23 (23.00)	28 (28.00)	51 (25.50)	0.66 ^{NS}
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)	P=0.42
V) Quality of food items				
Poor	20 (20.00)	15 (15.00)	35 (17.50)	
Good	30 (30.00)	25 (25.00)	55 (27.50)	2.08 ^{NS}
Average	50 (50.00)	60 (60.00)	110 (55.00)	P=0.35
Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)	

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage of respective total.

BPL- Below poverty line, AAY- Antyodaya anna yojana

** Significant at 5 per cent

NS: Non- significant

Table 3.3 shows about the relationship between functioning of fair price shops (like current system, behaviour of dealer, distance of fair price shops from their residence, opening & closing hours and quality of food items) and responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries of the study area.

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis H₀: There is no significant relationship between functioning of fair price shops and responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries.

Alternate Hypothesis H₁: There is significant relationship between functioning of fair price shops and responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries.

Responses of beneficiaries regarding functioning of FPSs are described along with chi-square value in Table 3.3. Chi square test was done to know the differences in the functioning of fair price shops with beneficiaries. Table 3.3. revealed that Chi- Square value is 8.38 and P value is 0.02. Since, P value is less than α (0.05) level of significance. This indicated that null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries and distance of fair price shops from their residence. From the above table it could be inferred that there is no significant relationship between responses of (BPL & AAY) beneficiaries and some of functioning of fair price shops such as current system (P value = 0.47, Chi square value = 1.50), behaviour of dealers (P value = 0.54, Chi square value = 1.24), quality of food items (P value = 0.35, Chi square value = 2.08) and opening & closing hours (P value = 0.42, Chi square value = 0.66) Since, P values are greater than α (0.05) level of significance. Therefore, null Hypothesis is accepted. It indicated that there is no change in responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries based on their current system, behaviour of dealers, quality of food items and opening & closing hours of fair price shops because of almost similar level of income.

The perusal of table showed that among all, 75 per cent of beneficiaries found that current system of fair price shops is good. Similarly, in BPL 72 per cent beneficiaries responded in the same way followed by AAY (71%). Those beneficiaries who experienced that the FPS system the same as earlier were 18 per cent among all, 19 per cent in BPL and 17 per cent in AAY beneficiaries. Whereas, among all (14%), BPL (9%) and AAY (5%) beneficiaries were revealed bad opinion about the current system of FPS. Therefore, the results of the study shown that majority of PDS beneficiaries were found current system as a good one.

It was observed that 55 per cent (BPL) and 48 per cent (AAY) beneficiaries found friendly behaviour of FPS dealers. Similarly, 26 per cent of BPL and 27 per cent of AAY beneficiaries commented about the rude attitude of fair price shop dealers and the remaining 19 per cent BPL and 25 per cent AAY beneficiaries felt that FPSs dealers have polite behaviour. Out of total, most of FPSs attendants' behaviour was friendly (51.50%) followed

by rude (26.50%) and polite (22%) attitude. This shows that less than one third beneficiaries are affected with the rude behaviour of the fair price shop dealers. Due to this problem, beneficiaries are unable to ask the dealers regarding their queries about the entitled quantity and price.

Quality of PDS food items ascertains the social- economic prosperity of the family in particular. It plays a critical part in the standard of living and nutritional health. The status regarding the quality of food has presented in Table 3.3. The perusal of the table shown that 55 per cent of all beneficiaries, 60 per cent of BPL and 50 per cent of AAY beneficiaries said that the quality of food was average. Beneficiary's opinions about the good quality of food were highest in the case of BPL (30%) followed by all (27.50%) and lowest on AAY (25%). Responses of respondents regarding the poor quality of food items revealed that 20 per cent, 17.50 per cent and 15 per cent of respondents were among BPL, all and AAY, respectively. The study reveals that the grain quality given under PDS was generally acceptable. Therefore, study indicated that still there is a need to improve the quality of the food.

It was noticed from the table that out of total, 149 respondents found that the PDS outlets were timely opened & closed and 51 per cent respondents were opposite to it. Among the category of BPL & AAY, 77 per cent & 72 per cent respondents have given the same observation, respectively. The study indicated that majority of the respondents that fair price shops were working well in time in the study area.

The details of FPSs distance from beneficiary's residence are presented in Table 3.3. Distance was categorised into 3 groups. Among all beneficiaries, majority of them had their residence in between 1 to 4 km away from their FPSs followed by 23.50 per cent of the beneficiaries had their residence at ≥ 4 km distance and the rest of the 8 per cent had below 1 km distance. The category-wise analysis revealed that majority of BPL respondents (75%) live with in 1-4 km away from FPSs and AAY beneficiaries (62%) also falls in the same. Further, 10 per cent of BPL and 6 per cent of AAY beneficiaries were had their residence < 1 km from their FPSs. The study pointed out that the majority of the beneficiary's residences were far away from the FPSs. Due to this reason, they have to spent more time to purchase the ration from FPSs.

4. CONCLUSION

The current study contributed to throw light on the status of PDS in Sirmour. The study concluded that majority of households belongs to 30 to 50 years of age. There were little difference found between BPL and AAY beneficiaries' education pattern and income level. Most of the beneficiaries were illiterate their income was very less. Government provides ration to enhance the nutritional level through PDS system but it was not sufficient to fulfil the requirement of the family. Therefore, Govt. should provide PDS ration according to no. of the family member of the beneficiary so they can get sufficient food. Accordingly PDS food will able to enhance their nutritional and balanced diet. The study also revealed that there is no significant relationship between functioning of fair price shops such as current system, behaviour of dealers, quality of food items, opening & closing hours of FPSs and responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries except distance of FPSs from beneficiary's residence. It indicated that there is no change in responses of BPL & AAY beneficiaries regarding the functioning of fair price shops because there was not huge difference between the incomes of both types of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries gave positive feedback about the opening and closing time of FPSs throughout in a month and also they were found satisfy with the attitude of the FPS dealers. Whereas, they complained that the PDS outlet was far from their residence. Therefore, Govt. should establish FPSs at the village level instead of panchayat so that beneficiaries can have the access of PDS ration easily.

REFERENCES

- [1] Anonymous. 2022. Rural development department. Government of Himachal Pradesh India.
- [2] Beura, L. and Mishra, L. 2022. Public distribution system in Odisha- A case study of Balangir district. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 10(1): 392-404.
- [3] Arora, N., Singh, D.P., and Bourai, A.V. 2018. Public distribution system and food security in India: A case study of Uttarakhand. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 3(8): 3934-3940.
- [4] Basu, D. and Das, D. 2015. Social hierarchies and public distribution system of food in rural India. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 51(12): 1653-1666.
- [5] Dreze, J. and Khera, R. 2015. Understanding leakages in the public distribution system. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(7): 39-42.
- [6] George, N. A. and McKay, F. H. 2019. The public distribution system security in India. *International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health*, 16(17): 3221.
- [7] Kishore, A. and Chakrabarti S. 2015. Is more inclusive more exclusive? The new style public. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(7): 39-42.
- [8] Rajkumar, P. 2013. Service quality measurement of the public distribution system in the food grain supply chain. *International Journal Business performance and Supply Chain Modeling*, 5(2): 131-147.
- [9] Sandhu, A. 2015. National food security act, 2013 and food security outcomes in India. SAGE Publication, 18(4): 365-370.

