

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM: ARE THE CUSTOMERS SATISFIED???

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Abstract:

Public Distribution System is a Government sponsored chain of shops entrusted with the work of distributing basic food and non-food commodities to the needy sections of the society at very cheap prices. The public distribution system contributes significantly to the provisions of food security. It enables the supply of food grains to the poor at a subsidized price and also helps to control open market prices for commodities that are distributed through the system. It evolved as a system of distribution of food grains at affordable prices at the time of emergency. Over the years, the term public distribution system has become synonymous with the term 'food security and also an important part of government's policy for the management of the food economy in the country. Kerala has achieved significant milestones in the reform of the public distribution system with the implementation of the electronic public distribution system project and the model pilot scheme of computerized ration shops. The study tries to find out the consumer satisfaction towards the public distribution system when they obtain it at affordable price and overview on the effectiveness of the public distribution system. This study also examines the problems experienced by the customers who are using PDS regularly for their food needs along with the study of the new reform that gives insights on the effectiveness of the public distribution system and the challenges it has to face.

Key words: Public distribution system, food grains, ration shops, subsidies problems in PDS

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Introduction

The public distribution system is primarily the social welfare and anti-poverty program of the Government of India. Essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene, and the like are supplied to the people under the public distribution system at subsidized prices. The public distribution system has been one of the most important elements in India's safety net system for almost fifty years. In India, the implementation of the public distribution system has been the joint responsibility of the central and state government. The central government procures, constructs godowns, stores, and transports the essential commodities. The responsibilities for the actual distribution of the material to cardholders through fair price shops are that of the government of the state. It is a well-known fact that India's public distribution system is the best and largest distribution network of PDS. The Government intervention in the public distribution system in India started in 1940, during the interwar period. The public distribution system network expanded in the 1970s and 1980s after the Green Revolution. In the 1980s, the public distribution system coverage was extended to rural areas. By 1985 the efforts were made to make it available to all the tribal blocks of the country. The statutory system of rationing through public distribution system was introduced in Kerala with effect from 24/10/1965 under the Essential Commodities Act 1955. There is a two-tier system of the public distribution system in Kerala. At the first level public distribution of food grains procured from the centre through the Food Corporation of India (FCI). At the second level by the Kerala State Civil Supplied Corporation set up in 1974, which procures rice, wheat, sugar, pulse, etc.

Kerala's public distribution system was the one that evolved as the most efficient and effective measure of food security, undoubtedly a model for most other states. The salient features of the model were its universal coverage, very high levels of utilization physical access made possible through a vast network of retail outlets, rural bias, and progressive utilization of the system. In this actual food-deficit state with a vastly dwindling acreage under paddy cultivation, the public distribution system provided for the necessary succor against the vagaries of the market, thus adequately addressing the food security concerns of the poor households. The public distribution system has a significant role

to control the price line and saving the poorest strata from the exploitation of private traders. The public distribution system also has great significance for those districts like Thiruvananthapuram which are not self-sufficient in the production of food grains and consumer articles.

Significance of the Study

Public Distribution System is a poverty alleviation program of the government of India especially for the weaker sections of the population. It is running under the control of the government to reduce the poverty and to ensure safety and thereby make a perfect economy. It provides necessary food grains at a fair market price. But the public distribution system is not effective. There are so many problems related to working in the public distribution system. They are poor quality of products, barriers of ration card, malpractice, and black marketing corruptions, etc. At present, the public distribution system is an unavoidable part of society. Trivandrum is having one of the best and most effective public distribution systems in India as the poor use the public distribution system effectively more than the rich. The present study covers the public distribution system in the Trivandrum district. It tries to identify the problems of the public distribution system and measure the level of satisfaction of customers towards the public distribution system when they obtain the things regularly at affordable price and gives an overview on the effectiveness of the public distribution system. This study also helps to examine the problems experienced by the customers.

Objectives

- 1) To study the awareness of cardholders towards different schemes of public distribution system.
- 2) To determine the level of satisfaction towards the public distribution system scheme by different cardholders.
- 3) To examine the factors that influence the customers towards public distribution system.
- 4) To analyze the problems existing in the public distribution system.

Research Methodology

The present study focused on analyzing customer satisfaction on the public distribution system in the Trivandrum district. By the objective of the study, the following methodology has been adopted for conducting the study.

Source of data: Primary data: The primary data is collected from the customers in the Trivandrum district with the aid of a questionnaire. Secondary data: It was used mainly to support the primary data. Secondary data is collected from various journals, magazines, project reports, and websites.

Sample size: The survey is carried out among 100 respondents in the Trivandrum district. The sampling technique used for the study is convenient sampling.

Tools used for data analysis: Simple statistical tools percentage and weighted average method were used for the analysis. The analysis of data is presented through tables, pie diagrams, bar diagrams, etc.

Review of Literature

A review of all available related studies is quite indispensable to understand the basic concept and theories about the research problem. Without a review of previous studies, it will be difficult for the researcher to deal with the particular project correctly. Several studies related on distribution system have already been completed by several individuals some of the studies which are related to the present study are described below:

Neethu Abey George and Fiona H Mcky (2019) conducted a study on the topic "The public distribution system and food security in India". Under this, they studied the public distribution system at a glance its features, functions, goals, benefits, and challenges. And they listed out the existing corruptions and limitations and also suggest the measures to overcome the barriers are discussed in this study.

Anuradha.G (2018) "Public Distribution System in Tamil Nadu: Implication for Household Consumption". In this study, she reveals that the weaker section was more satisfied with the PDS. She also showed the important contribution of PDS to household food consumption. She showed that how much goods are contributed to the weaker section in Tamil Nadu through PDS.

Tame Ramya and Tame Ramjuk (2018) conduct a study on the topic "People's perception of PDS in Arunachal Pradesh: A comparative analysis of 2 districts. The public Distribution System (PDS) is viewed as the most important food security network in India in terms of its coverage and public expenditure yet it is not without its limitations. The present study focuses on the performance of PDS in the districts of Papumpare and Kurung Kumcy by analyzing the household consumer perceptions, for this purpose, 300 households were surveyed from the two districts. The purposive sampling method was followed in choosing the respondents from the district headquarters of Itanagar (Papum Pare) and Koloriang (Kurung Kumey). The study found that more than three-fourths of the consumers in both the districts were satisfied with the performance of PDS. The Fair Price Shops in Papum Pare district were perceived to be faring better in terms of the number of working days compared with their counterparts in Kurung Kumcy. Besides, the respondents in the Kurung Kumcy district have to travel more than the respondents in Papum Pare to reach the ration shop. Almost all the respondents acknowledged the important role being played by PDS in the well-being of their families. In respect of the replacement of PDS over cash transfer system, over 70% of the respondents in Kurung Kumey and nearly 89% of the respondents. Papum Pare district did not want a cash transfer. The findings suggest the need to support and strengthen the existing policy of supplying the commodities at subsidized prices.

Bhagysree. P. G (2017) "A Study on the Public Distribution System with the reference to Colachel Municipality". In this study she presented information about the working of PDS, details of the access and the utilization and the satisfaction of the family cardholders in Colachel Municipality. She also showed the premium objective of PDS, was to ensure the supply of essential commodities at an affordable price to the general public. State Government was making all efforts to make the PDS more effective. To ensure greater efficiency, the application of computers along with intelligent administration can equip the Government better to face the challenges successfully.

B. Mahalingam and Akash Raj D P (2017) conducted a study on the topic "Major drawbacks of the public distribution system in India". The main aim of this article is to illustrate the major drawbacks of PDS in India through various studies conducted in this country. The performance and problems of PDS varies regionally based on the implementation of the system by state governments and union territories hence this article would give a holistic picture of major problems in the public distribution system in-country

Velmurugan. R and Lavanya. D (2017) conducted a study on the topic "Problems in Public Distribution System at Coimbatore District". The vicious circle of poverty in India may not be reduced until the goods distributed at fair price shops reach the ultimate beneficiaries. Still, several problems prevail at fair price shops, thereby the real beneficiaries have not received the goods distributed at fair price shops. Thus, the present study has been carried out to ascertain the problems that prevail in the public distribution system at Coimbatore district data required for the study have been collected through the questionnaire. By adopting a convenient sampling method, data are collected from 900 cardholders. The collected data are analyzed by employing factor analysis. The result of the study disclosed that the fair price shops are found overcrowded, the public has to spend two to three hours buying goods at PDS, non-availability of new stock, etc.

Anugrup Bodh (2016) "Evaluation study on the role of PDS in shaping household and nutritional security in India". In this study, he reveals the significant role of the PDS program. The PDS play the role in providing the food security to household, especially to lower-income people. This study also depicts that, as household grow richer, they will try to diversify their diet and obtain more calories from another source

JhaParveen, Acharya Niclachala(2016) The targeted PDA intended to provide subsidized food to poor

households in the largest welfare program in India, with a budget corresponding to about 1 per cent of the net natural product. Several studies have found the system to be inefficient and costly in assisting the poor. This paper analyzes the case for, and against replacing a reformed version of this system with a targeted and differentiated Cash Transfer Scheme (CT). Such a scheme could cover about two-third of households and make a far large transfer to the poorest compared to the actual subsidy embedded in the current system, eliminating the risk of large exclusion errors. Main advantage with CT scheme—about two-thirds of all households can be covered, the transfers to the poorest are huge compared to the actual transfers embedded in the TPDS, the impact on income distribution is progressive, the risk of large inclusion errors is eliminated, the scope of corruption and fraud is diminished, operational cost is slashed, no poverty lines. A switch from the TPDS to a targeted and differentiated all-India CT scheme, based on biometric UID cards, cannot take place before these have been issued to all households or the great majority. This will take time, perhaps several years, and meanwhile many pilot CT schemes should be tried out in the states and districts where the issuing of UID cards has advanced the most, a process that has already been initiated.

Dreze Jean and Khera's (2015) Analysis in their Article “Understanding Leakages in the PDS” revealed that many states have initiated PDS reforms in recent years and reduce these leakages at the base of the national level NSS data remain high. For instance, leakages are relatively low in states like Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu known for relatively good public services. On the other hand, several states with high leakages have shown virtually no progress between 2004-05 and 2011-12, of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh. There has been significant improvement in the PDS in Bihar in recent years. In the earlier Article (Dreze and Khera 2011), we argued that APL quota was the most likely source of mass leakages. Yet PDS leakages remain unacceptably high about 30% according to the lowest estimate for 2011-12. Second, there is strong evidence of declining leakages in recent years. Third, the decline in recent years. Third, the decline is particularly clear in states that are known to have undertaken serious PDS reforms, confirming the effectiveness of these reforms. Fourth, Bihar's recent experience suggests that even the worst governed states are capable of improving their PDS. Fifth the biggest source of continuing leakages is the APL quota (and probably also “Adhoc quotas”). The implementation of the NFSA is an important opportunity to phase out this leaky quota and complete the process of PDS reforms across the country.

Mahendran. A (2014) “Intervention of one rupee rice in PDS: utilization and impact in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha states in India. To find out the utilization and impact of the scheme of pricing one kg rice at one rupee among the poor people and other beneficiaries at PDS outlets in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha states of India. For this study, a multi-stage random sampling method was used. Quantitative data was collected from the public using a structured questionnaire. Data collection was done between 2 December 2013 and 11 February 2014. The results show that more than 94.8% of poor families are utilizing PDS grains in Odisha and 92.5% utilizing PDS grains in Poverty Line (APL) families, and they do particularly in rice. As part of PDS reform, both these states have improved transparency with computerized ration shops and biometric ration cards and PINs. He has opined that, PDS outlets are more useful to poor people than for the above poverty line families. This study suggests that allotments of rice for APL families must be cut to control corruption and leakages, the study also suggests that millets must be introduced in the PDS to increase nutrition security.

Prasad, Pathania (2014) Following the Raman Singh government ascendance to power in December 2003, the reform process in Chhattisgarh continued. The Raman Singh govt. passed its first major PDS legislation the order discontinued the operation of FPS by private dealers everywhere in the state, and permitted their operation only by gram

panchayats, cooperative societies, Self-Help group (SHG), and forest protection committee. Chhattisgarh also increased the coverage of the PDS through the Mukhyamantri Khadyann Sahayata (MKS) scheme. Chhattisgarh implemented several smaller reforms after 2004, including sending “SMS alerts” to report grain movements to citizens who registered to receive them.

Rahman (2014) In this paper “Revival of Rural Public Distribution System” quantifies the

improvements in PDS in Rural India after 2004-05 using data from three rounds of the survey conducted by the NSS. It finds that Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh continue to be the leading performers, but early movers such as Orissa saw improvements in the functioning of the PDS between 2004-05 and 2009-10. Without a doubt, there has been greater political will and commitment on the part of the various states' governments to make the PDS viable. It is encouraging to find that the expansion has covered those who are most vulnerable and live at the margins, such as the SCs and STs. It was seen from the study that a greater number of households in the lower-income classes now not only have greater access to the PDS but are also consuming larger quantities from the PDS. To implement the commitment to greater food security, state governments have taken a battery of measures, from end-to-end computerization to more commission to fair price shop owners. Some states still lag and their performance continues to be less than satisfactory.

Arora (2013) examined food subsidies in India and analyzes the reasons behind the failure of PDS in many parts of the country. The article utilizes the 61st round of National Sample Survey Data on the monthly consumptions of households for the year 2004-05 and examines the role of the Public Distribution System in ensuring price stability. The study pointed that the two major objectives for initiating this food security program were to provide nutritional support to the poor through subsidized and cheap food grains and maintain price stability, it has largely failed in meeting its goals. It has failed to reach the poor in most of the states other than the southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, where it has been partially successful. To improve the functioning of the system it is imperative to improve outreach, particularly in the Northern states of the country, and also suggested the inclusion of banks in providing food security.

Sawant. Sand, Rahul. J. Jadav (2013) in their study "Public Distribution System of Essential Commodities as a Social Security (A Study of Satara District Maharashtra)". Examined that supply of poor quality goods, weight cutting, non-availability of commodities, calculating PDS articles in the open market are the problems prevailing in PDS.

Puri (2012) in his study on reforming the PDS in Chhattisgarh had focused on extending coverage, improving delivery, and increasing transparency have led to this remarkable revival. An overwhelming majority of the beneficiaries are now satisfied with the way their ration shops function and are firmly against the proposal of cash transfers. This article presents the finding of a team that visited randomly selected villages in Mahasamund and Sarguja Districts of Chhattisgarh as part of the PDS survey 2011. The survey of the PDS in both districts revealed that a majority (88%) of the respondents were satisfied with the functioning of their ration shops and were setting their food grains regularly at the correct prices.

Svedberg (2012) The TPDS intended to provide subsidized food to poor households, is the largest welfare program in India, with a budget corresponding to about 1% of the net natural product. Several studies have found the system to be inefficient and costly in assisting the poor. This paper analyzes the case for and against replacing a reformed version of this system with a targeted and differentiated cash transfer scheme. Such a scheme could cover about a two-a third of households and make for larger transfers to the poorest compared to the actual subsidy embedded in the current system, eliminating the risk of large excluding errors. A switch from the TPDS to a targeted and differentiated all-India CT scheme based on bio-metric UID cards, can't take place before this has been issued to all households or the great majority. This will take, perhaps several years and mean by may pilot CT schemes should be tried out in the State and Districts their issuing of UID cards has advanced the most, a process that has already been initiated.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The present study aims to understand the customer satisfaction of the Public Distribution System. For this purpose, sample of 100 beneficiaries was selected from the Trivandrum district. The questionnaire was used for the collection of primary data. The data so collected is organized and analyzed.

Table 1 : Demographic Classification

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Up to 20	10	10
21-40	42	42
41-60	36	36
Above 61	12	12
Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	36	36
Female	64	64
Others	0	0
Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Below 10,000	52	52
10,000-50,000	40	40
50,000-1,00,00	6	6
Above 1,00,000	2	2
Region	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Rural	84	84
Urban	16	16
Source of Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Newspaper/ Television	29	30.5
Mobile Phone	8	8.6
From Ration Dealers	40	42
Supply co	11	11.5
Other	7	7.4
Total	95	100

Source: Primary data

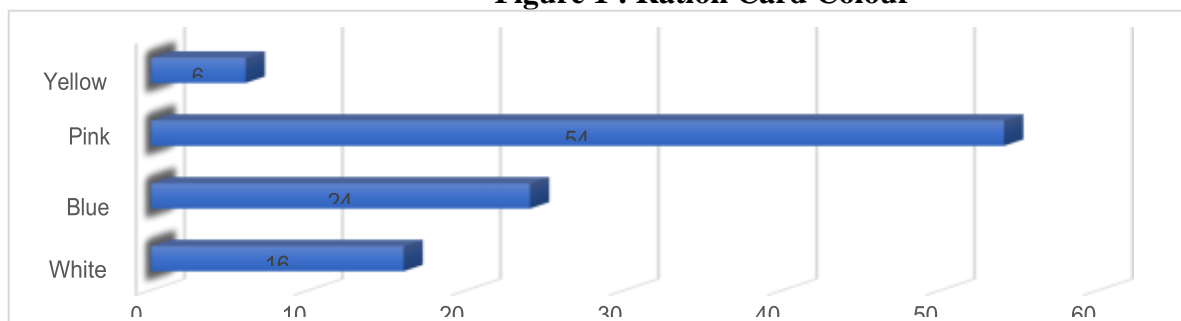
Table 1 shows the age-wise classification of respondents. 42(42%) respondents fall under the age group 21-40. Only 10 (10%) respondents fall between the age group of up to 20. In the gender-wise classification of the respondents, out of 100 respondents, 64 (64%) respondents are female and 36 (36%) respondents are male. In monthly income-wise classification of the respondents, 52(52%) respondents come under the income range of below 10,000, 40 (40%) respondents under an income ranging between 10,000 -50,000, and there are only 2 (2%) respondents are coming under the income range of above Rs 1, 00,000. The region-wise classification of respondents shows that from the total respondents, 84(84%) respondents are living in the rural area and 16(16%) respondents are living in the urban area. The above table also shows that the main sources of information of peoples about PDS. It shows that 95(95%) respondents are fully aware of the PDS. Out of the 95 respondents, 40 respondents get the information about the PDS services from ration dealers and minority respondents (7%) get the information from Mobile phones.

Table No: 2 Ration Card Colour

Ration Card Colour	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
White	16	16
Blue	24	24
Pink	54	54
Yellow	6	6
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Figure 1 : Ration Card Colour



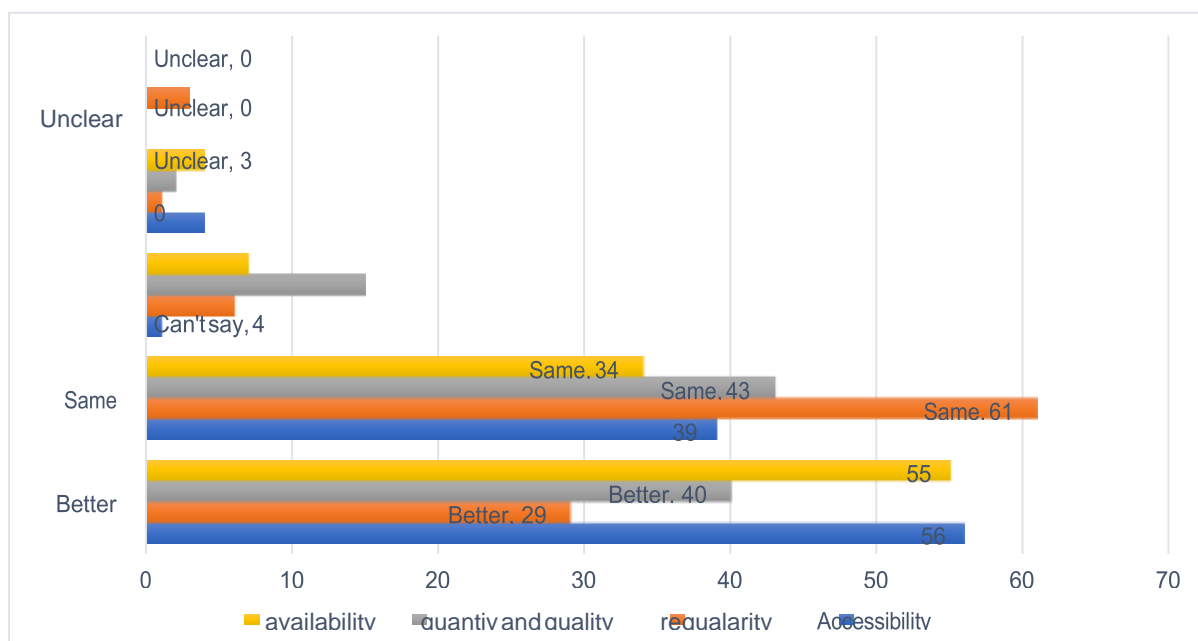
The above table shows that the ration card color-wise classification of respondents. 54 (54%) respondents have a pink color ration card, 24(24%) respondents have blue, 16 (16%) respondents have white and 6(6%) respondents have a yellow ration card.

Table 3 : PDS Today Compared with 5 Years Ago

Variables	Better	Same	Worse	Can't say	Unclear
Accessibility	56	39	1	4	0
Regularity	29	61	6	1	3
Quantity and Quality	40	43	15	2	0
Availability	55	34	7	4	0

Source: Primary data

Figure 2 : PDS Today Compared with 5 Years Ago



The above table shows a comparison of the overall functioning of the PDS with 5 years ago. The majority of respondents say both accessibility and availability are better than 5 years ago. 61(61%)

respondents' opinion is that regularity is the same as compared with 5 years ago. And 40(40%) respondents say quality and quantity is better and 43(43%) respondents' opinion is it same as compared with 5 years.

Table 4
Reason for Not Getting the Full Quota

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Hoarding	6	16.8
Insufficient stock	19	52.7
Resale of ration items	9	25
Other	2	5.5
Total	36	100

Source: Primary data

36 respondents do not get the full quota from PDS shops. Out of 36 respondents, 19(52.7%) respondents think that the reason is insufficient stock, 9(25%) respondents revealed that it due to resale of ration items 6(16.8%) respondents reveal hoarding and 2(5.5%) respondents reveal that it is due to other reasons.

Table 5
Satisfaction of Quality of Products

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Satisfied	66	66
Not satisfied	34	34
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

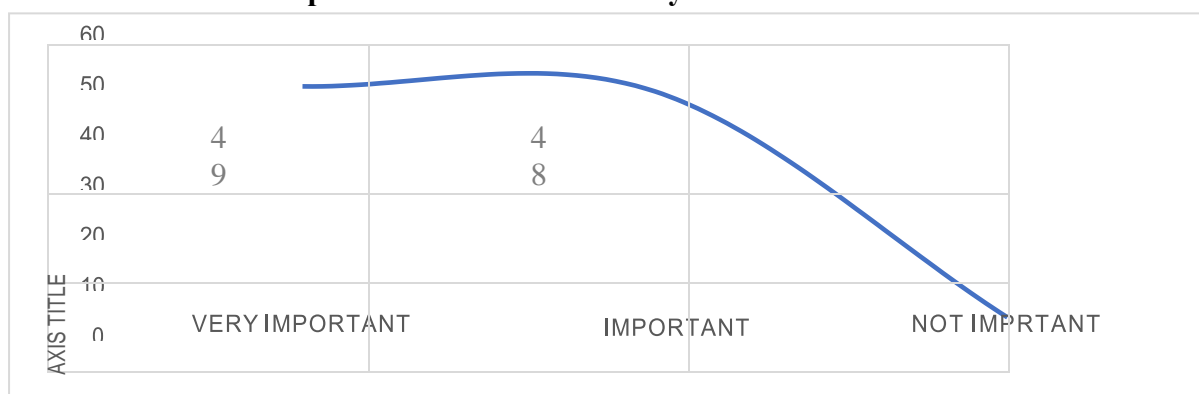
The above table shows the level of satisfaction of customers towards the quality of products provided by the PDS. Out of 100 respondents, 66 (66%) respondents are satisfied with the quality of products and 34(34%) respondents are not satisfied with the quality of products.

Table 6
Importance of PDS for Family's Welfare

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Important	49	49
Important	48	48
Not Important	3	3
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Figure 3
Importance of PDS for Family's Welfare



From the above table, we could understand the PDS is very important for the respondents. 49(49%) respondents' opinion is very important and 48(48%) respondents' opinion is important. 3(3%) respondents say PDS is not important for their family's welfare.

Table 7
Satisfaction of Products Provided

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	76
No	24	24
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

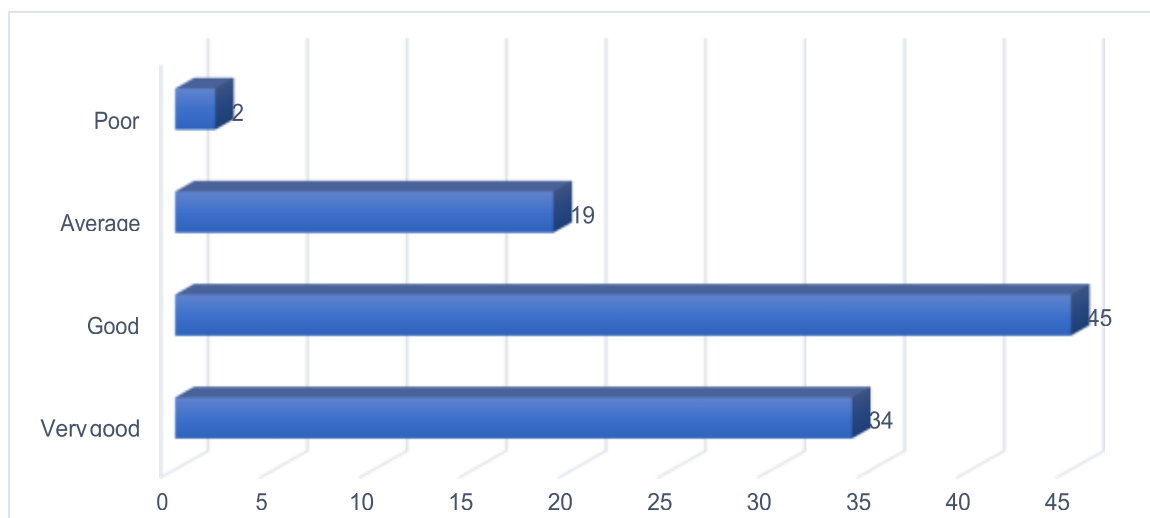
Out of 100 respondents, 76(76%) respondents are satisfied with the present products provided by the PDS, and 24(24%) respondents are not satisfied with the present products provided by the PDS.

Table 8
Effectiveness of Digital Punching System

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very good	34	34
Good	45	45
Average	19	19
Poor	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Figure 4
Effectiveness of Digital Punching System



The digital punching system is the new system introduced by the Government for collecting details about the customers and product which he buys. About 34(34%) respondents opinioned is very good and 45(45%) respondents' opinion is good and about 2(2%) respondents' opinion is the digital punching system is not good.

Table 9
Linking Phone Number

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Outstanding	20	20
Excellent	37	37
Very good	23	23
Good	18	18
Poor	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the opinion of Respondents towards linking of phone number with ration card. 37(37%) respondents' opinion is linking of phone number with ration card is excellent, 20 (20%) respondents says it is outstanding and 2 (2%) respondents respond that this system is poor.

Table 10
Distance of PDS Shop

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Fair	18	18
Nearby	60	60
Kilometers	20	20
More than 2 kilometers	12	12
Other	100	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the distance from the PDS shop to the respondent's home. The house and PDS shop of 60 (60%) respondents of the total 100 respondents are nearby. The distance of home from PDS shop is more than two kilometers in case of 2 (2%) respondents.

Table 11
Satisfaction on Quality of Grains

Choice of Respondents	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Rank 6	Total	Score	Rank
Rain soaked	5	6	8	5	3	8	35	5.76	6
Foul smell	5	12	7	6	2	3	35	6.8	3
Broken rice	5	7	9	8	3	3	35	6.38	4
Grain hard to boil	4	10	5	8	2	6	35	6.095	5
Insect infected	10	11	5	5	2	2	35	7.428	1
Many husk, small stones and paddy	10	6	10	3	3	3	35	7.047	2

Source: Primary data

35 respondents are not satisfied with the quality of cereals. They rank the above showed problems based on their preference. From the above rank correlation, most of the respondents gave the first rank to the insect infected and so many husks, small stones, and paddy. But by using the weighted average method, it found that the first rank goes to the insect affected as it gets the highest score. The second rank goes to husk, small stones, and paddy. And the last rank i.e., sixth is given to the problem rain soaked.

Table 12
Problems Faced by Customers

Problems	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Actual mean score
Problems of inability to obtain ration card	16	25	35	18	6	3.27
Frequent stock out situation	16	24	39	9	10	3.21
Non awareness of their entitlement	12	41	25	13	9	3.34
Non-existence of grievance redressal	15	35	38	6	6	3.47
Corruptions	22	32	30	9	7	3.53
Irregularity	16	27	37	12	6	3.29
Hassles	14	30	33	17	3	3.26

Ration dealers refused to give us full quota	22	28	19	17	14	3.28
Wheat and rice are often mixed with sand	26	28	16	15	13	3.33
Stock is very old	13	31	27	27	12	3.36
Ration depots do not display the rate list	23	29	18	19	11	3.34
Under weight	16	33	27	20	4	3.37
Irregularities in the opening of PDS	10	32	25	31	2	3.17
Non display of information	16	31	23	20	10	3.23

Source: Primary data

Mean score =3

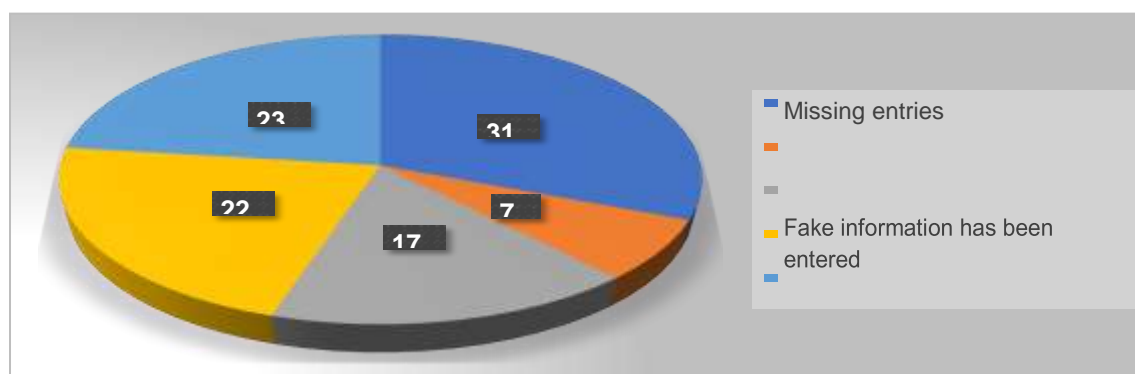
From the above table, actual mean score of all problems faced by customers are above the mean score, so, it seems all the problems are negatively affected customers of PDS. While comparing the actual mean score and mean score it is found that the main problem faced by the customers is corruption (actual mean score 3.53). Then, also found that the non- existence of grievance redressal (actual mean score 3.47) and underweight (actual mean score 3.37) are the major problems faced by customers after the problem of corruption.

Table 13
Irregularities in the Maintenance of Ration Card

Choice of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Missing entries	31	31
Fake information has been entered	7	7
Some entries have been overwritten	17	17
Entries are illegible	22	22
Other irregularities	23	23
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Figure 5



Irregularities in the Maintenance of Ration Card

The above table shows the irregularities in the maintenance of ration card. Out of 100 respondents, 31 (31%) respondents say entries are missing in the ration card. And 7 respondents notice that some fake information has been entered into the ration card.

Findings

The findings based on the analysis of the customers are as follows.

Majority of the respondents fall under the category of 21-40 years and the least respondents from the age limit up to 20. Majority are female and come under the income range of below 10,000. In this study, 81 per cent of respondents are living in rural areas and 64% of respondents are living in the urban area. 54 per cent of respondents have a pink ration card, 24 per cent of respondents have a blue ration card, 16 per cent of respondents have a white ration card and 6 per cent of respondents have yellow. While checking the awareness of respondents towards the basis of ration card division, majority said that level of income is the basis of classification and the respondents get timely information about new services provided by PDS. The majority of respondents say both accessibility and availability are better than 5 years ago. 64 per cent of respondents get their full quota from a shop. But 36 per cent of respondents did not get a full quota from the shop. 52.7 per cent opined that insufficient stock is the reason for not getting the full quota from ration shops. 25 per cent respondents' opinion is it due to resale of ration items. Majority of respondents are satisfied with the quality of products and has opined that PDS is very important for the family's welfare of the respondents. 45 per cent of respondents opined the digital punching system is very good and 37 per cent of respondents say linking with phone number is excellent and 2 per cent respondents say it was poor. 64 per cent of respondents timely receive messages after buying products. But 30 per cent of respondents are getting messages rarely and 6 per cent of respondents never get the messages. 52 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the behavior of ration dealers but 15 per cent of respondents are not satisfied. 35 per cent of respondents are not satisfied with the quality of cereals. On the basis of their preference, the customers rank their problems. The first rank goes to the Insect Affected as it gets the highest score. The second rank goes to Husks, Small Stones and Paddy and the last rank i.e. sixth is given to the problem Rain-Soaked. The main problems faced by the customers in PDS are corruption, non-existence of grievance redressal, and low quality of products provided. 31 per cent of respondents say entries are missing in the ration card. And 7 per cent of respondents notice that some fake information has been entered into the ration card.

Conclusion

PDS is a government sponsored chain of shops entrusted with the work of distributing basic food and non- food commodities to the needy sections of the society at very cheap prices (The Economic Times, 2022). PDS became the most important part of rural people's family's welfare. But there is some problems, i.e. low quality of the food grains, corruptions, non- existence of grievance redressal, underweight, etc. For the success of the PDS elimination of the problems is inevitable. There must be proper control by the authority for the smooth functioning of the PDS. The strong intervention from the government to ensure adequate food supply to every poor in the society will help to eradicate poverty by attaining food security. Surely effective PDS can change India to a poverty free country in future.

Suggestions

Deliver notification message about the availability of goods to each customer from ration shops. Increase the availability of stocks and improve the quality of cereals. Ration shop dealers need to be more effective regarding their way of behavior. All the news regarding PDS should be displayed in ration shops. Proper care must be taken by the concerned authorities so that inferior quality goods are not be distributed to the general public. Conduct timely inspection by an

authority to avoid reselling of products.

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