



IMPACT OF PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM ON POVERTY REDUCTION OF WEAKER SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY: A STUDY IN MYSORE DISTRICT, INDIA

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Abstract

Public distribution system is a national food security system, established by the Government of India under ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public distribution and managed jointly with state Government in India. This system was first introduced in 1939 in Bombay by the British Government as a measure to equitable distribution of food grains to the urban consumers in the face of rising prices over the years the system expanded a very largely emerging as a poverty alleviation measure to become a permanent feature in India food economy. The food security of the world rests on diversity-the diversity of cultural values of farming communities as well as genetic diversity. Food security requires diversity of species, production and distribution systems. Further, it also requires the protection of the human rights-including the inalienable rights of indigenous peoples and farmers' rights. Food security cannot be isolated from issues of equity in land tenure, pricing policies or trade practices. Public distribution system in India playing a significant role in order to empower the weaker sections of the society those who are living below the poverty line. In this paper an attempt is made to analyse the impact of public distribution system in food security and improving the socio-economic status of the target people in Mysore district.

Keywords: Food Security; Poverty reduction; Weaker Sections

1. Introduction

Public distribution system (PDS) is a rationing mechanism that entitles household to specified quantities of selected commodities of subsidies prices. In most parts of the country public distribution system has been universal and all households, rural urban, with a registered residential addresses are entitled to rations. Eligible households are given a ration (Varying with house hold size and age composition) of selected commodities. The exact entitlement (quantity, range of commodities and prices) varies across states.

The six essential commodities supplied through PDS nationally are rice, wheat, sugar, edible oil, kerosene and coal. Additional commodities like pulses, salt, tea are commodities that are made available through a

network of Fair Price Shops. In 1998, there were a total of 4.5 lakhs Fair Price Shops in the country of which 3.6 lakhs were in rural areas, as of 1998 there were a total of 182.8 million families with ration cards in the country and an average, there were 406 ration cards assigned to each Fair Price Shop (Report of Ministry of Food and Civil Supply, Government of India).

Public Distribution system has been one of the most crucial elements in food policy and food security system in India. It started as a rationing system in the back drop of Bengal famine in 1943 as well as a war time. Measure during the Second World War. Over the years, the system expanded enormously emerging as a poverty alleviation measure to become a permanent feature in Indian food economy. In the context of new economic and liberalization policy, it is regarded as a safety net to the poor whose number is more than 330 million and are nutritionally at risk. Further, it is regarded as an important delivery channel in the management of food security system of India, with a network of 4.63 lakh fair price shops catering of the needs of 1992 lakhs of ration cardholders. It distributes subsidized food and non-food items to India's poor. Major commodities distributed to consumers include staple food grains such as Wheat, Rice, Sugar, and Kerosene through a network of Fair Price Shops (FPS) established in several states across the country.

The food grains production during 2009-10 is estimated at 218.11 million tonnes which is 16.36 million tonnes or 6.98% less than 234.47 million tonnes of foodgrains production in 2008-09. The khariff food grains production estimated at 103.95 million tonnes in 2009-10 is 14.19 million tonnes or 12% less than 118.14 million tonnes of khariff production in 2008-09. The rabi foodgrains production estimated at 114.16 million tonnes is 2.17 million tonnes or 1.87% less than 116.33 million tonnes or rabi foodgrains production in 2008-09 (Acharya, K.C.S.).

The cumulative rainfall from 1st June to 30th September 2010 was excess to normal in 31 meteorological sub-divisions and deficient/scanty in 05 out of the 36 meteorological sub-divisions in the country. For the country as a whole, the rainfall from the south-west monsoon in 2010 was 2% above the long period average. With this background the present study intends to analyse the role of public distribution system in empowering the weaker sections of the society.

2. Research Problem

Public Distribution System in India is a major intervention aimed at ensuring food security to all the poor, especially the vulnerable sections of the society. It not only provides essential commodities, including food grains, to more than 6 million families on regular basis, but also ensures the prices stability in the market. The PDS operates through a large distribution network of around 4.89 lakh fair price shops. Originally the PDS was started in 1960 and later on re-designated as targeted public distribution system in June 1997. Functioning of the PDS is the joint responsibility of the Central Government and State Governments, while the central Government is responsible for the procurement and transportation of wheat/rice, sugar, kerosene oil, edible oils etc. Up to the principal distribution Centers, the state governments are responsible for the identification of families living Below the Poverty Line, issue of ration cards, appointment of dealers for the distribution of essential commodities to the vulnerable sections of the society through FPSs. Several studies confirm that a thriving nexus is in operation between transporters, fair price shops and officials of the department including anti-hoarding cell and the entire network of civil supplies. With this background study intends to analyse the present position of PDS and its impact on food security and empowerment of weaker sections of the society.

3. Objectives of the Study

The present study is mainly based on the following objectives;

- To study the performance of public distribution system in food security in India and in Karnataka.
- To evaluate the impact of public distribution system on improvement of food security of the community in the study area.
- To analyse the role of public distribution system on reduction in the poverty among the poorer sections of the society in Mysore District.
- To offer suggestions for further effective improvement of public distribution system for the reduction of poverty in India.

4. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been framed in the present study.

- The Public Distribution System played an important role in raising the socio-economic status of the BPL community.
- There is positive impact of Public Distribution System on food security in the study area.
- Due to Public Distribution System many households crossed the poverty line in the study area.

5. Study Design and Methods

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected from 100 respondents (Gender dimension, age, caste, religion, marital status, education level) through field survey with help of questionnaire schedule (ration cards, annual income, livelihood security, poverty conditions and health conditions) by using random sampling method. Secondary data are collected from books, journals, Planning Commission and the Ministry of food, Civil supplies and Consumer Affairs Department in India and Karnataka. The data analysis has been carried out by using simple statistical methods like frequency, percentages and averages; these will help us to understand the gross root level realities.

6. Results and Discussion

It includes the gender details, age and educational details of the sample respondents. These details are very essential in social science research to analyse the status of respondents.

Table 1: Gender dimension of sample Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	20	20%
Male	80	80%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 1 shows the sex-wise distribution of sample respondents in Mysore. Out of 100 respondents 80 respondents belongs to male category, only 20 respondents are from female category. This clearly indicates that still now male in dominating the household sector.

Table 2: Age details of the Respondents

Age	No of Respondents	Percentage
25-30	4	4%
31-40	28	28%
41-50	30	30%
51-60	20	20%

61-70	16	16%
Above 70	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 2 indicates the age details of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents majority from 41-50 age group about 30 percent, followed by 28% belongs to 31-40 age group. Least i.e., from above 70 years only one respondent.

Table 3: Caste details of the Respondents

Caste	No of Respondents	Percentage
OBC	80	80%
S.C	14	14%
ST	4	4%
GM	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 3 shows the details of the caste of the sample respondents in Mysore district. Out of 100 respondents, 80 respondents from OBC community, 14 from scheduled caste, 04 respondents from ST community and only respondent from GM community. Because in India caste system plays a significant role in getting the benefit from the government schemes.

Table 4: Religion details of the Respondents

Sl. No	Religion	No of Respondents	Percentage
1	Hindu	75	75%
2	Muslim	25	25%
	Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey.

Table 4 indicates the religion details of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents in Mysore district chosen for the study 75% are from Hindu religion and 25% respondents are from muslim religion Table – 5.12 denotes the marital status of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents 92 percent are married, remaining 8 percent of the respondents belongs to widowed.

Table 5: Marital status of the Respondents

Marital	No of Respondents	Percentage
Married	92	92%
Unmarried	-	-
Widowed	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Education details of the respondents are presented in Table 6. The data in the table clearly indicates that majority of the respondents belongs to illiterate category i.e., 40 percent and 38 percent of the respondents are from primary education level category, 12 percent of the respondents belong to higher primary education level.

Table 6 Educational Level of the Respondents

Education	No of Respondents	Percentage
Primary	18	38%
Secondary	10	10%

Higher	12	12%
Illiterate	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 7 indicates the main occupation of the respondents in Mysore district. Out of 100 respondents interviewed majority i.e., 56 percent are engaged in primary activity i.e., agriculture in the study area and 38 percent of the respondents engaged in other activities and only 6 percent of the respondents are devoted themselves in secondary sector activities in the study area.

Table 7: Main Occupation of the Respondents family

Occupation	No of Respondents	Percentage
Primary	56	56%
Secondary	06	6%
Other	38	38%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey.

Table 8 gives us the details of the family size of the respondents in the study area. Out of 100 respondents 96 percent are living in joint families. It is noted that even under the globalization regime we found the joint family system in the study area. Only 4 percent of the respondents belong to nuclear family.

Table 8: Family size of the Respondents

Size	No of Respondents	Percentage
Joint	96	96%
Nuclear	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table-9 indicates the annual income of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents interviewed majority(44%) of the respondents belongs to Rs.10,000 to 14,000 income group and 36% of the respondents comes under the Rs.2,000 to 9,000 income group. And remaining 20% of the respondents belongs to Rs.15,000 to 25,000.

Table 9 : Annual income of the Respondents

Income	No of Respondents	Percentage
2000-9000	36	36%
10,000-14,000	44	44%
15,000-25,000	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

7. Land Holdings of the Respondents

The details of the land holdings of the respondents under study is more important to know the level of poverty to consider for beneficiaries for extending the government facility for food security. Table 10 denotes that the Land Holdings of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents only 1 respondent have been 6 acres of Land. Others holding 1acre to 5 acres only.

Table 10: Land Holdings of the Respondents

Land (Acre)	No of Respondents	Percentage
No land	16	16%
Below 1 Acre	12	12%
Up to 1 Acre	12	12%
Up to 2 Acres	18	18%
Up to 3 Acres	16	16%
Up to 4 Acres	2	2%
Up to 5 Acres	4	4%
Up to 6 Acres	2	2%
More than 6 Acres	18	18%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 11 deals with the Type of Ration card of the respondents in Mysore District. Out of the 100 respondents 66 respondents are belongs to BPL category i.e., 66 percent. And 26 percent of the respondents belong to APL category and only 8 respondents i.e., 8 percent of the respondents holding Anthyodaya ration Cards in the study area.

Table 11 : Type of Ration card of the Respondents

Ration card	No of Respondents	Percentage
BPL	66	66%
APL	26	26%
Anthyodaya	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 12 clearly denotes the Information about consumers Inconsistent quality is the norm at the ration cards. Out of 100 respondents under study only 4 respondents are strongly agreed, 36 percent of the respondents agreed and it is pertinent to noted that 56 percent of the respondents disagree with the inconsistent quality of the ration cards in the study area. Only 4 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreeing.

Table 12: Information about consumer Inconsistent quality is the norm at the ration cards

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	04	4
Agree	36	36
Disagree	56	56
Strongly disagree	04	4
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 13 indicates the faulty weights at the ration shop. Out of 100 respondents under the study only 6 respondents are strongly agreed about the faulty weight at the ration shop and 34 percent of the respondents are agreed and 16 percent of the respondents are disagreed and 38 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreed.

Table 13: Faulty weights at the ration shop

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	12%
Agree	34	34%
Disagree	16	16%
Strongly disagree	38	38%

Source: Field survey

Table 14 shows that the respondents are faced corruption and they have directly bribed the official on more than on occasion. Out of the 100 respondents 16 respondents are opined strongly agreed about the corruption and have directly bribed the official on more than on occasion, and 16 percent of the respondents are agreed and 18 percent respondents are disagreed. 50 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreed

Table 14: Faced corruption and have directly bribed the official

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	16	16%
Agree	16	16%
Disagree	18	18%
Strongly disagree	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 15 indicates the quota of ration allocated for family. Out of the 100 respondents under study only 2 respondents strongly agreed about the quota of ration allocated for family and 26 percent of the respondents are agreed, 46 percent of the respondents are disagreed and 26 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreed.

Table 15: The quota of ration allocated for family

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	02	2%
Agree	26	26%
Disagree	46	46%
Strongly disagree	26	26%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 16 denotes that the current of public distribution system in Mysore District. Out of the 100 respondents opined only 6 respondents are strongly agreed about the current system of public distribution system. And 66 percent of the respondents are agreed and 28 percent of the respondents are disagreed and no respondents opined about strongly disagreed.

Table 16: The current system of public distribution system

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	06	6%
Agree	66	66%
Disagree	28	28%
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

8. The impact of PDS on Livelihood Security

Table 17 interprets the impact of PDS on livelihood security of the respondents. Out of 100 respondents no one respondent opined well about the impact of PDS on livelihood security and 62 percent of the respondents opined that bad, only 18 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the PDS and 20 percent of the respondents are not satisfied.

Table 17: The impact of PDS on livelihood security

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Good	-	-
Bad	62	62%
Satisfaction	38	38%
Not satisfaction	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 18 indicates that the impact of PDS after livelihood security of the respondents in Mysore District. Out of 100 respondents there is no respondent opined about the impact of PDS after livelihood security. And 46 percent of respondents are improved, 16 percent of the respondents are not bad 38 percent of the respondents are satisfaction.

Table 18: Livelihood security after public distribution system

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very Good	-	-
Improved	46	46%
Not bad	16	16%
Satisfaction	38	38%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 19 shows that the health condition of the respondents in Mysore District. Out of the 100 respondents 50 respondents opined about health condition is improved and 30 percent of the respondents gradually in improving. And 20 percent of the respondents opined about health condition can't say.

Table 19: Health conditions of sample respondent

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Improved	50	50%
Gradually in proving	30	30%
Can't say	20	20%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 20 indicates the poverty level after PDS programme in Mysore District. Out of 100 respondents 46 respondents are answered yes i.e., 46 % and 54 respondents are answered no.

Table 20: Impact of PDS programme on poverty level

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	46	46%
No	54	54%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field survey

Table 21 shows the respondents suggestions for further effective improvements in PDS in Mysore District. Out of the 100 respondents 26 respondents are answered about the price should be minimized and 20 percent of the respondents to give dualities of food grains, 24 percent of the respondents are right time persons food grains should be supplied. And 30 percent of the respondents are only to right persons food grains should be supplied.

Table 21: Suggestions for further effective improvements in PDS

Particulars	No of Respondents	Percentage
Price should be minimized	26	26%
To give dualities of food grains	20	20%
Right time supply of food grains (cereals)	24	24%
Only to right persons food grains should be supplied	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey.

9. Problems of Public Distribution System

Basic problems of the public distribution system which are identified in the course of investigation are as follows;

- High transportation charges: As most of the village were distant from the public distribution system shops, it resulted in higher transportation charges, which were as high as Rs. 20 to 40 per bag. But the rate allowed by the government is Rs. 8 for transportation of one bag from storage point to retail centre including the commission.
- Inaccessible villagers: Most of the PDS points were in the remote area. So the consumers are facing problem to get the ration from the PDS.
- Irregular supply of commodities: Besides the inadequate and insufficient quantities of commodities sold through public distribution system, irregular supplies of them are another important problem of public distribution system. Owing to irregular supply of the rationed items, consumers have to come time and again to secure, their supplies of one or more items, as there is no fixed time on which these are made available. In the absence of fixed time schedule consumers have to visit a fair price shop several times for obtaining have to single commodity.
- Black marketing of PDS commodities: According to Deepak Ahluwalia, a little more than a third of the food grains and sugar and over a half of kerosene oil don't reach the actual users of PDS, and goes to open market in the form of PDS marketing.

10. Major Findings of the Study

Based on the analysis and discussion on the role of PDS and its impact on food security of weaker sections, the following findings have been drawn:

- Out of 100 respondents only 2 respondents had 6 acres of Land. Others holding 1 acre to 5 acres only.
- Out of the 100 respondents 66 respondents are belongs to BPL category i.e., 66 percent. And 26 percent of the respondents belong to APL category and only 8 respondents i.e., 8 percent of the respondents holding Anthyodaya ration Cards in the study area.
- Out of 100 respondents under study only 4 respondents are strongly agreed, 36 percent of the respondents agreed and it is pertinent to noted that 56 percent of the respondents disagreed with the

- inconsistent quality of the ration cards in the study area. Only 4 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreed.
- d) Out of the 100 respondents 16 respondents have strongly agreed about the corruption and have directly bribed the official on more than one occasion, and 16 percent of the respondents are agreed and 18 percent respondents are disagreed. 50 percent of the respondents are strongly disagreed
 - e) Out of the 100 respondents only 6 respondents are strongly agreed about the current system of public distribution system. And 66 percent of the respondents are agreed and 28 percent of the respondents are disagreed and there is no respondents are opined about strongly disagreed.
 - f) Out of 100 respondents no one respondent opined well about the impact of PDS on livelihood security and 62 percent of the respondents opined that bad, only 18 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the PDS and 20 percent of the respondents are not satisfied.
 - g) Out of the 100 respondents opined only 6 respondents are strongly agreed about the current system of public distribution system. And 66 percent of the respondents are agreed and 28 percent of the respondents are disagreed and no respondents opined about strongly disagreed.
 - h) Out of the 100 respondents 26 respondents are answered about the price should be minimized and 20 percent of the respondents opined to give dualities of food grains, 24 percent of the respondents are right time persons food grains should be supplied. And 30 percent of the respondents are only to right persons food grains should be supplied.

11. Suggestions

In the light of our findings and observations some suggestions are made about effective functioning of PDS for food security of weaker sections of the society. The suggestions are listed as follows:

- There is a need to shift from the existing expense inefficient and corruption ridden institutional arrangements to those that will ensure cheap delivery of requisite quality grains in a transparent manner and are self targeting.
- There is need to amend law to ban controls and restrictions on trade between states. There should be free movement of all kinds of commodities including agricultural produce. Free trade will help make-up the difference between production and consumption needs, reduce supply variability, increase efficiency in resource use and permit production in regions more suited to it.
- To achieve cent percent literacy, the food security need can be productivity linked to increased enrolment in schools. With the phasing out of PDS, food coupons may be issued to poor people depending on their entitlement.
- Items others than rice and wheat need to be excluded from the purview of TPDS.
- Subsidy on Kerosene should be gradually phased out and alternate avenues of marketing it needs to be explore. Because, subsidized Kerosene is used for adulteration with diesel.

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