

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH THE PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In the contemporary competitive era, it has become a challenge for the dealer and the producer to satisfy the customers by providing them with the expected product or services. PDS also is not an exception in this case. It is considered as the main instrument in the hands of State Governments for ensuring the safety net to the poor against the soaring prices of essential commodities. In this regard, the State of Kerala sets itself frame a model for implementing the PDS as a universal system. The purpose of setting-up Public Distribution System will be invalidated if real recipients have not used the products offered at Fair Price Shops optimally. The study focuses on the satisfaction of customers towards PDS at various levels and a primary research was done on 485 respondents from three panchayats of Kottayam District. The study observed that the utilization of services given by the PDS scheme depends largely on the satisfaction which they draw from ration shops.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Public Distribution System, Customer Satisfaction*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indian Parliament approved the National Food Security Act in 2013 in order to ensure essential food to all people and thereby, to terminate the hardships of hunger in the Country. Public Distribution System (PDS) is a segment of that movement which provides food grains for the poor and needy at a subsidized price. PDS is established as a joint venture of the State Government and the Central Government. PDS had been reformed and renewed with many amendments time to time, e.g., Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS), Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Annapurna Scheme (APS), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), e-PDS and latest e-Ration Card. In spite of all these developments and improvements, the customer satisfaction level is at a low level due to various drawbacks. The government wants always to identify the factors that satisfy the customers more or less and modify those factors to find a solution. The present study focuses on the consumers' satisfaction with the Public Distribution System in Kottayam District.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Mahendren(2013)** analyzed the customer satisfaction on the food delivery mechanism of universal PDS in Tamil Nadu. The study shows that more than three-fifths of poor families are satisfied with the effective delivery mechanism of universal PDS. **Ashok and Naveena (2014)** in their paper revealed that only a few people were satisfied with the current

PDS in Mysore District and most of the people were not purchasing anything from the PDS due to the poor quality of commodities supplied by PDS. Also to get their limited quota people have to wait in long queues. **Chandanshiv and Narwade (2013)** in their study observed that more than half of the beneficiaries were not satisfied with the quality of the food grains supplied through PDS. But still, they purchase food grains at the Fair Price shop as they don't have enough money to purchase it from the open market. A study by **Puri (2012)** in Chhattisgarh revealed that the majority of the households were satisfied with the functioning of their ration shops and were getting their food grains regularly at current prices. **Lavanya and Velumurugan (2017)** in their study noted that the PDS customers would be satisfied only if they could obtain goods from the PDS regularly or if it should be inaccurate quantity, if the shops have adequate staff members, if these shops are located at an easily accessible place, if the commodities were distributed in time, if the distributed goods were fitted for their consumption and so on. **Barada and Mahalik (2016)** in their study applied Kano model by chosen ten factors for the identification of customer satisfaction. The study perceived that when the early PDS system is compared to the current system, the current PDS has improved a lot in the fields of minimally delivery days, better customer grievance system, e-ration card and SMS system that enhanced customer satisfaction. But the same study identified some of the dissatisfactory elements too. **Sheetal and et.al (2017)** in their paper shows that BPL card holders are not at all satisfied with the quality of food grains which are distributed through ration shops. Another study carried out by **Iyer and et.al (2011)** revealed the main reasons for the non-consuming PDS for its fuller levels. It depended upon the non-availability of goods in ration shops, lack of qualitative food grains, under-weighment of the commodities, non-availability of the ration cards, etc. These negative factors had badly affected the efficiency of the PDS system and satisfaction level the customers.

## OBJECTIVES

- To study the socioeconomic factors that influence PDS card holders to purchase from the PDS shops.
- To understand the factors related to customer's satisfaction from the Public Distribution System.

## METHODOLOGY

The study has been based on the Primary data. In order to collect Primary data, a Multistage Purposive Random Sampling technique has been used. Among 11 blocks, Vaikom (More SC households) and Erattupetta (More ST households) have been selected for the study. In Vaikom block, the researcher has been chosen Maravanthuruthu Panchayat among the 6 panchayats of the same Block because it includes number of Scheduled Caste BPL cardholders than the other panchayats. Number of APL card holders belong to Udhyapuram panchayat; therefore the researcher selected Udhyapuram Panchayat in the category of APL card holders from this block. In Erattupetta block, Meluka panchayat will be chosen among 6 Panchayat because of number of Scheduled Tribe BPL cardholders living in this panchayat. In total, three panchayats have been chosen for the present study. They were on the basis of the concentration of BPL SC, BPL ST, and APL categories. Based on this APL and AAY category, 10 percent of PDS card households and from BPL 3 percent cardholders were selected. Thus, about 485 households have been selected for the survey. To analyze it the data, simple percentages and Likert scale have been used wherever necessary.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PDS is an inevitable institution of the Indian Government, which makes possible the welfare of the weaker and marginalized in the country. The following section combines the results obtained from 485 respondents across three panchayats of Kottayam district. The study attempts initially to bring out the overall socioeconomic characteristics of cardholders and later, brings out the overall satisfaction of the customers on the prevailing PDS system in Kottayam District. The important findings of the study are as follows:

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Cardholders**

Sl. No	Sex	Panchayats			Total
		Melukav (AAY)	Udhayanapuram (APL)	Maravanthuruth (BPL)	
1	Male	23(31.51)	41(32.80)	127(44.25)	191(39.38)
2	Female	50(68.49)	84(67.20)	160(55.75)	294(60.62)
<b>Age</b>					
1	Young	6(8.22)	10(8.00)	22(7.67)	38(7.84)
2	Middle	43(58.90)	74(59.20)	183(63.76)	300(61.86)
3	Old	24(32.88)	41(32.80)	82(28.57)	147(30.31)
<b>Community</b>					
1	GC	1(1.37)	47(37.60)	32(11.15)	80(16.49)
2	OBC	2(2.74)	60(48.00)	134(46.69)	196(40.41)
3	SC	0(0.00)	18(14.40)	46(16.03)	64(13.20)
4	ST	70(95.89)	0(0.00)	75(26.13)	145(29.90)
<b>Type of Family</b>					
1	Joint	1(1.37)	1(0.80)	2(0.70)	4(0.82)
2	Nuclear	72(98.63)	124(99.20)	285(99.30)	481(99.18)
<b>Occupation</b>					
1	House Wife	37(50.68)	76(60.80)	136(47.39)	249(51.34)
2	Daily Wage	25(34.25)	20(16.00)	108(37.63)	153(31.55)
3	Agriculture	4(5.48)	8(6.40)	9(3.14)	21(4.33)
4	Service Sector	0(0.00)	8(6.40)	1(0.35)	9(1.86)
5	Business	1(1.37)	6(4.80)	6(2.09)	13(2.68)
6	Others	6(8.22)	7(5.60)	27(9.41)	40(8.25)
	Total	73(100)	125(100)	287(100)	485(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 depicts the socioeconomic characteristics of the PDS card holders. It could be found from the present study that more than half (60.62%) of the respondents were female. The panchayat-wise analysis showed that the share of the female respondents was more in numbers in all these panchayats. Out of 485 respondents under the study, 39.38 percent belonged to male category and 60.62 percent belonged to the female category. The study observed that the majority of the respondents in all the categories were between the age of 35 and 60. Out of 485 respondents, 38 respondents belonged to the age group of 0 to 35, 300 respondents were in the age group of 35 to 60 and 147 respondents were in the age group of above 60. The panchayat wise analysis also evidenced that a majority of the sample respondents were in the middle age group. Another socioeconomic factor which can influence the purchase from PDS outlets is the type of community to which the respondent belonged to. In the present analysis, the communities concerned with the study area are GC, OBC, SC, and ST. The cross-tabulation between the community and panchayat results shows that 40.41 percent of the people belonged to OBC community. In Maravanthuruth panchayat, 46.69 percent of the people were from OBC category and in Melukav panchayat 95.89 percent people fell under ST category. Type of family is an important economic

factor that decides the household's depended for the purchase of food commodities. From the table, a total of 99.18 percent people belonged to nuclear family and only 0.82 percent of the sample households belonged to a joint family system. This situation was uniform among the panchayats also. In this study, more than half of the respondents were housewives. From the study, it is noted that 31.55 percent were engaged in daily wage and it was their main source of income. Around 8.25 percent of the people were engaged in other types of occupations. Only 4.33 percent of the samples were engaged in agriculture. In Maravanthuruth, the highest numbers of people were engaged in daily wage for their major portion of income (37.63%).

**Table 2: Factors Related With the Consumer's Satisfaction**

SL.NO	Particulars	Panchayat Wise Classification			Total
		Melukav (AAY)	Udhayanapuram (APL)	Maravanthuruth (BPL)	
1	Belong	73(100.00)	114(91.20)	286(99.65)	473(97.53)
2	Convenient Place	69(94.52)	124(99.20)	279(97.21)	472(97.32)
3	Buy Product	73(100.00)	117(93.60)	287(100.00)	477(98.35)
	Total	73(100)	125(100)	287(100)	485(100)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 presents factors related to the consumer's satisfaction. Out of 485 households, 97.53 percent were opinioned that they were belonged to the category as in ration card. But a few (2.47%) respondents had opinions that they were not included in the category as in the ration card. Table 2 also explains the convenient place of fair price shops by the respondents. It has been found that as high as 97.32 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the location of PDS. Here it is focused on whether the shops are near to their home, whether the shops are situated in comfortable environmental situation and neatness of the surroundings of the shops etc. Only 2.68 percent respondents were not satisfied with the location of the PDS. The frequency of purchase from PDS is explained in the same table 2. From this analysis, as high as 98.35 percent households were brought PDS commodities from the ration shops. The other 1.65 percent households from Udhayanapuram Panchayat expressed their opinion that except kerosene they were not purchasing any other PDS commodities; for the rest of the commodities they depend upon various other sources. This study noted that all of the respondents in Melukav and Maravanthuruth panchayats were purchasing commodities whatever available through PDS because, for them, the subsidized food items are the necessities of life at low cost for their survival.

**Table 3: Rate the Quality of the Commodities Last Purchase From the Ration Shops**

SL.NO	Rate Quality	Panchayat Wise Classification			Total
		Melukav (AAY)	Udhayanapuram (APL)	Maravanthuruth (BPL)	
1	Good	13(17.81)	17(13.60)	49(17.07)	79(16.29)
2	Average	58(79.45)	88(70.40)	206(71.78)	352(72.58)
3	Poor	2(2.74)	20(16.00)	32(11.15)	54(11.13)
	Total	73(100)	125(100)	287(100)	485(100)

Source: Primary Data

The quality of the commodities last purchased from the Ration Shops is represented in Table 3. It is obvious from the analysis that nearly three fourths (72%) of the respondents had marked 'average quality' for the last purchased food items from the PDS shops. And 16.29 percent respondents labeled 'good quality' for the last purchased commodities and 11.13 percent respondents were not happy with the last purchased commodities from the shops; therefore they had given 'poor' label. In Udhayanapuram panchayat many respondents revealed 'poor' quality of the last purchases from the PDS

shops. More than three fourths (79.45%) respondents from Meluka were satisfied with the available quality of the commodities from the shops therefore they had marked 'average'.

**Table 4: Likert Scale Measurement of the Satisfaction Level of PDS Consumers**

Sl. No	Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total Score	Mean Value	Rank
1	Commodities available	770	1032	177	24	2	2005	4.13	II
2	Time and days Convenient	945	832	234	18	1	2030	4.18	I
3	Proper measurement	915	692	273	58	9	1947	4.01	IV
4	Getting adequate information	930	780	228	50	3	1991	4.10	III
5	Approach of the shop keeper	795	752	297	72	6	1922	3.96	V
6	Price of items are reasonable	620	800	327	88	8	1843	3.80	VI
7	Express complaints	550	520	378	168	35	1651	3.40	VII

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 shows the satisfaction level of PDS consumers on various PDS factors. For measuring the satisfaction level of PDS consumers five point Likert scale is used viz., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. It is clear that measurement of the satisfaction level of PDS consumers is given more importance to the factor that Rank (1) time and days convenient (4.18) from the analysis. Households responded that, except Sundays rest of the week days shops were open and the time allotted for the collection of commodities were suitable for all the respondents, Rank (2) commodities were available on all days (4.13) in spite of the quality and less quantity available from the shops. Commodities were available on all days. They can purchase, according to their convenience in respective shops and specified month. Rank (3) they are getting adequate information (4.10) because this is very much important for the cardholders. Because, from the study it could be noticed that, more people were eagerly waiting for the adequate information about the available commodities. Rank (4) Commodities are not properly weighted (4.01). Regarding this factor, PDS consumers have less impression. The sample householders revealed that the distributors usually try to cheat the uneducated people and women with the quantity. They use different tactics like diverting the customers by continuously talking to them while measuring; they also do some other malpractices on the weighing machine too. Rank (5) Approach of the shopkeeper (3.96) is indifferent. The interviewed respondents either directly and indirectly exposed this fact. Rank (6) Price of ration items is reasonable (3.80). However, it was expressed by the respondents that shopkeepers are trying to exploit maximum the consumers in this matter. Rank (7) Express complaints (3.40) goes to the last rank, based on their satisfaction. Cardholders were not willing to complain whenever they have difficulty in any of these factors. The reason was that if they express any negative remarks about the shopkeepers and their measurements, they will be treated later in an unsympathetic manner by the shopkeepers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The utilization of services given by the PDS scheme depends largely upon the satisfaction level of the customers in relation to the quality of services from ration shops. From the above analysis, it could be comprehended that the prevailing PDS system protects the needs and satisfaction level of the customers to some extent, but it has to be implemented and scrutinized at its full swing to realize its basic purposes effusively. Therefore the Government is expected to employ its power and facilities for the better coordination and services of the PDS.

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