**CHAPTER – I**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Public Distribution System (PDS) is a social safety net ensuring the provision of essential commodities to the targeted population at subsidized prices. The PDS at its very inception as an important welfare policy of the government was meant for managing food scarcity and ensuring the affordability of the food grains. The primary objectives of PDS from its origin have been to ensure price stability, food security, rationing in times of scarcity and keep a check on the private trade. PDS policies have been dealt within the successive five-year plans in India. The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) emphasized expansion of Aadhaar numbers and opening of the bank accounts which allow the possibility of transferring benefits directly to the beneficiaries.

Indian food security system, established by the Government of India under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is to distribute subsidized food and non-food items to India’s poor. The items under the Public Distribution System include flour, rice, kerosene, sugar and other necessities of life at reasonable and fixed prices. The Government distributes these items through network of ration shops (fair price shops). There is different distribution mechanisms used under the scheme. These are based on the categorization of people below and above property line. To enable this facility, ration card is provided to the beneficiaries. By holding this ration card, the beneficiaries will be available with their monthly gains from the ration shops and this was a traditional system.

These ration shops are likely to become a permanent feature of our social life. They are the best and the most successful means to curb unsocial elements and to keep the price within reasonable limits. These shops are gone a long way to stabilize price of articles of daily consumption. However, Public Distribution System has been criticized for its urban bias and failure to save the poorer sections of the population effectively. The targeted Public Distribution System is costly and gives rise to much corruption in the process of extricating the poor from those who are less needy. The ration shop dealers resort to malpractices. They divert the grains of the open market to get better margin. Some dealers sell poor quality grains to ration shops. Still others open their shops irregularly, and some dealers weigh less and cheat illiterate customers.

Kerala State has the privilege of having the best system of Public Distribution in the whole country. The system is evenly spread over the whole state without any distinction between urban or rural to ensure equitable distribution of the food grains at a fairly low cost to all people especially to the weaker sections of the population. There is a very good network of wholesale and retail outlets for the distribution of rationed articles under the Public Distribution System.

India’s prime minister Sri Narendra Modi has announced a nation-wide lockdown and government of India initiated and implemented the lockdown since 25th March 2020 initially for 21 days then extended it for another 19 days until 3rd May 2020 and again extended it for 14 more days until 17th May 2020 and again till 31st May 2020 with some relaxation to slow down the spread of COVID-19.This project report is an attempt to analyze the effectiveness of Covid 19 on public distribution system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the whole world to face an economic crisis and hence putting people even more at risk of food insecurity; supply chain setup has been disrupted severely due to numerous transport restrictions. There is a need for various components of government machinery to work in complete synergy for aligning services, making provision for supplies and arranging means of delivery to the citizens. This review gives an understanding about the food security situation in India, problem faced by the citizens, in particular the poor and vulnerable population, small and marginal farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also analyses the steps taken by the government of India to address the food security challenges during COVID-19.

As former international food policy research institute (IFPRI) director general Shenggen Fan, writes, COVID-19 is a health crisis, but it could also lead to a food security crisis if proper measures are not taken.1 More than 180 countries have been affected by COVID-19. The global economy is almost certainly in recession due to this pandemic.2 There has been a drastic disruption in the supply chain and logistics both for producer and consumers as evidenced by closed borders, national lockdown, and travel restrictions. According to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, COVID-19 pandemic could cut the global investment by 40%.3 As businesses close to prevent the transmission, financial and job losses are one of the most important concerns. According to UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in the worst-case scenario, the world economy could contract by 0.9% in 2020.4 This human crisis demands coordinated, decisive, inclusive and innovative policy action from the world’s leading economies.

**CHAPTER – II**

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the whole world to face an economic crisis and hence putting people even more at risk of food insecurity; supply chain setup has been disrupted severely due to numerous transport restrictions. There is a need for various components of government machinery to work in complete synergy for aligning services, making provision for supplies and arranging means of delivery to the citizens. This project gives an understanding about the food security situation in Kannur, problem faced by the citizens, in particular the poor and vulnerable population, small and marginal farmers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also analyses the steps taken by the government of India to address the food security challenges during COVID-19.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Public distribution system (PDS) is a poverty alleviation programme and contributes towards the social welfare of the people. PDS is considered as principal instrument in the hands of State Governments for providing safety net to the poor against the spiraling rise in prices of essential commodities. Lockdown period had imposed in India on 25th March 2020. During the period people had suffered a lot due to Corona Virus. But the most important think for the people is they get free rice wheat, sugar etc… from the public distribution system. Government of India taken necessary steps to provide all the items is free in ration shop. This is very helpful to the people card it will be very helpful to below average people. Therefore, the paper aims to study the impact of Covid 19 on public distribution system in Kannur.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

* To identify the impact of covid on public distribution system
* To study the problems faced by people during these period with public distribution system
* To study the satisfaction level of customers with the public distribution system
* To study the satisfaction level of customers with the quality and

**RESERCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is a method that can be used to solve the research problems. It helps in studying how research is done scientifically. Research methodology provides various steps that can be adopted by the researcher in studying his research problems.

**Sources of Data**

The study uses both primary data and secondary data.

**Primary Data**

For the purpose of collection of data, interview schedule has been prepared and data was collected from the consumers who have purchased products through online. Adequate care has been exercised to collect unbiased data from the respondents.

**Secondary Data**

Secondary data for the study was collected from websites, journals, magazines and newspapers.

**Sampling**

**Sampling zsize**

The sample size was limited to 100 ration beneficiaries from Pappinissery Grama Panchayath.

**Sampling technique**

The sampling technique followed for the study is convenience sampling.

**Tools for Data collection**

a structure of interview schedule consisting of 50 questions covering personal and opinion factors was prepared. The respondents were asked to fill-up the questionnaire and their opinions were consolidated

**Tools for Analysis**

Tables were used for presenting the data

To analyse and interpret the collected data, percentage analysis and bar diagram were applied whereverrequired

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

* Availability of time and resources are important limiting factor for the study
* Reliability of the study depends on the reliability of the information given by the respondents
* Inherent limitations of sampling technique have affected the study to a certainextent.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The e-PoS system is new development in the public distribution system. Hence review of literature on e-PoS is not available. So literature related to studies conducted on PDS is collected.

Review of literature provides a critical summary of research already done on the relevant topic. It provides readers with a quick overview of the problem addressed; stress the need for the new study, and it demonstrates how it will contribute to existing evidence. Review of literature is conducted to generate theoretical and scientific knowledge about a particular phenomenon and results in a synthesis of what is known and unknown about that phenomenon. The primary purpose of literature is to gain a broad background available related to problems in conducting research. Thus it facilitates selecting a problem and its purpose, developing a framework and formulating a lesion plan. In brief, review of relevant literature is an analysis and synthesis of research source to generate a picture of what is known about a particular situation and to expose the knowledge gaps that exist in the situation.

In the last 50 years of existence of the PDS, various studies have been made by both officials and academicians and large volume of literature has grown around the same. Articles have appeared in a number of journals throughout the period examining and commencing upon the different facets of the system. Many research projects have been undertaken on PDS in India. Important studies are presented here.

**Agro-Economic Research Centre (AERC-I3 (1957**) Madras, has examined the impact of Government's food control measures on the agrarian economy of the erstwhile-Madras Presidency for the period 1938 to 1953. In general, it perceived the food control measures as "necessary evils" and the rationing of food as a positive service, especially when food availability remained very low and food prices rules very high.

**Agro-Economic Research Centre, (1965)** Madras, has examined the actual working of the Fair Price Shops in the Southern Region, covering thethree States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The study could not identify the really poor among the consumer households since income statements were not available. It was found that the open market prices could not be brought down by Fair Price Shops operations as at the Fair Price Shops supplies of food grains were only limited.

Uma and Leles(1973) in the study pointed out the significance of the relationship between the private trading activities and the Government's food policies. It confirmed that the grain trade in India operated efficiently within the technological and policy confines. It concluded that if Government's policies could be made to facilitate investment in the new storage and transport sectors and could be made to encourage technological improvement, the traditional market structure will be able to function economically and still more efficiently. This study did not examine the question of how to solve the food problem of the weaker sections under the free market system, given the real problem of extreme economic inequality in the society.

**Ramamurthy (1974)** in his study, he examined the levels of poverty and destitution in Tamil Nadu vis-a-visthe trends in the production and distribution of wage goods (cereals, pulses, sugar, tea and cotton) for the period 1960-61 to 1970-71. Ramamurthy emphasized the significant role that the Public Distribution System could play in the eradication of poverty and destitution in Tamil Nadu after establishing that the Public Distribution System is superior to all other anti-poverty measures.

**Rajapurohit (1978)** in his study, he stated the segments of the population who consumed less than the state average quantity of cereals were treated as the target group. The study suggested the exchange of superior cereals like Rice and Wheat with coarse cereals like Jowar, RagiandBajra through open market operation and distribution of coarse grains through the Public Distribution System.

Without definite measures, the latest global health crisis COVID-19 can lead to a food security crisis. (Fan, 2020) World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the spread of pandemic to 216 countries with over 10 million active cases.(WHO, 2020) With the massive rate of transmission, the disease has even indirectly infected the other realms of society as well. The global economy is already struck by the inevitable, lasting recession posing deeper social and political amendments.(Pathak et al., 2020) Governments imposing lockdowns constrained inter-state transport and international travel restrictions have disrupted the logistics and supply chain for the manufacturers, distributors, and consumers as well. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development presented a report claiming the automotive commerce (-47%), elementary material productions (-116%) and energy industry (-208%) are the hardest hit sector by COVID-19, cutting the global investment by 40%. (UNCTAD, 2020) Financial problems, downsizing, limiting access, increased job insecurity, reduced income localized price hikes, shortage of labors due to out-migration, and others are significant apprehensions. UN Department Economic and Social Affairs stated that at the worst extreme, the global economy could even condense by approximately 1% in 2020. (Press Trust of India, 2020) The crisis scenario can only be improved by harmonized decisions, international solidarity, innovative policymaking, and firm decisions by leading global economies.

According to Arif Husain, chief economist (world food program), it is still too early for an accurate assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the economy. Too much depends on what is not known - how long the outbreak lasts, how many countries it affects, and the type of policies governments will put in place to respond to the crisis. The economic downturn is to be expected at the global level, and this is likely to trickle down to developing economies. In these contexts, a slowdown in the Indian economy can exacerbate existing food insecurity. It limits people’s ability to access nutritious food in different ways, including through reduced income or increased job insecurity.

**CHAPTER – III**

**THE STUDY**

**3.1 PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM: AN ASSESSMENT**

Security (Food and Human) is one of the major challenges confronting the world today. Food security is inherently interlinked with other current global challenges of economy and climate change. The economic and environmental concerns in recent years have exacerbated global food security problems. A probable outcome of global warming suggests that a large part of the African continent will become drier and experience massive climatic fluctuations, which would have serious consequences for the region with over 70 per cent of the population being dependent on agriculture.

The PDS is a rationing mechanism that entitles households to specified quantities of selected commodities at subsidized prices. Eligible households are given a ration card, that entitles them to buy fixed rations (varying with household size and age composition) of selected commodities. The six essential commodities supplied through the PDS nationally are; rice wheat, sugar, edible oils, kerosene and coal. Additional commodities like pulses, salt, tea are supplied selectively. The commodities are made available through a network of fair price shops. In 1994, there were around 0.42 million fair price or ration shops in the country (0.32 million in rural areas and 0.099 million in urban areas). These shops were run by private agents, co-operatives and a few are state owned. An important feature of the PDS is that the responsibility for implementation, monitoring and for enforcement of legal provisions relating to public delivery rests with the state governments.

**3.2 PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION IN INDIA – AN OVER VIEW**

The Public Distribution System (PDS), a remnant of the rationing system from the Second World War years, is the present vehicle for delivering food subsidies in India. The PDS at its very inception as an important welfare policy of the government was meant for managing food scarcity and ensuring the affordability of the food grains. The primary objectives of PDS from its origin have been to provide price stability, food security, rationing in times of scarcity and keep a check on the private trade. PDS mainly functions through direct procurement of food grains from farmers through the divisions of the central government which controls the stocking, supply of the food grains to the state governments based on the share of entitlements. The history of PDS in India has been divided into four phases. The expansion characterizes the first phase to other cities, and PDS was also dependent on imported food grains (From the origin to 1960). The second phase was characterized by setting up of Agricultural Prices Commission and the Food Corporation of India (1960 to 1978). The third phase was marked by large-scale expansion with domestic procurement and stocks (1978 to 1991), during the fourth phase there was a transition from universal PDS to Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)4 (1991 to present) (Swaminathan, 2009).Evolution of PDS policies through Five Year Plans in India.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Fiveyearplans | PDSpolicies |
| FirstFive-Yearplan(1951-56) | Meetingtherequirementsofurbanandhighlyfooddeficitareas |
| SecondFive-Yearplan(1956-61) | Stabilizationofpricesthroughagriculturalproduction |
| ThirdFive-Yearplan(1961-66) | Stora11:efacilities |
| FourthFive-Yearplan(1969-74) | Stabilization ofconsumerandproducerpricesandstren<rthenin11:bufferstockoffood<>rains |
| FifthFive-Yearplan(1974-79) | Focusonthepoor |
| SixthFive-YearPlan0980-85) | Essential Sunnliesproducer |
| SeventhFive-YearPlan(1985-90) | ExtensionofPDSwithexpansionofFairPrice shopsinruralareas. |
| Ei!!hthFive-YearPlan(1990-95) | Expandin11:covera11:eandaccesstoPDS |
| NinthFive-YearPlan(1997-02) | TPDSwasintroduced |
| TenthFive-YearPlan (2002-07) | RestructuringofPDSthroughfoodstamps,smartcardsanddecentralizedprocurement |
| Eleventh Five-YearPlan(2007-12) | IdentifiesmaiordeficienciesinPDS |
| TwelfthFive-YearPlan(2012-17) | InnovativeprogrammesandInformationandCommunicationTechnologies(ICTs)forthe directtransferofbenefitstothebeneficiaries. |

During the plan period of sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) the Essential Supplies Programme was introduced in 1982 as the 17th point of the New 20 Point Programme, and it was aimed at expanding the PDS through more Fair Price Shops (FPSs) (GOI, 1980-85). The Seventh five-year plan (1985-90) contemplated for the extension of PDS with the expansion of FPSs in remote areas (GOI, 1985). The Eighth Five Year Plan (1990-95) envisaged that the PDS in India being extensive, there is room for far-reaching reforms in it. It coincides to expanding the PDS coverage and ensuring access to the needy, especially in rural areas, involving local democratic institutions including cooperatives and voluntary organizations, reducing the costs and minimizing leakages (GOI, 1991). During the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-02) emphasis was laid on developing food production by linking it with poverty alleviation and employment guarantee programmes, PDS became more targeted towards deficit areas. To make it more transparent and accountable to reduce leakages some steps were taken viz. The allocation of foodgrains to state governments for identification of eligible households, incorporation of Panchayats for the identification of the same, formation of vigilance committees, a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the PDS (GOI, 1997-2002).

Tenth Five year Plan (1997-2002) stressed for restructuring the PDS and the need to introduce reforms like smart cards, food credit/debit cards, food stamps and decentralized procurement, for the eradication of hunger and ensure the availability of food to the poor (GOI, 1997-02).

Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) has identified the major deficiencies of the TPDS including high exclusion & inclusion errors, non-viability of Fair Price shops, difficulty in visualising the price stabilization goal and leakages. The steps taken to strengthen the TPDS during this period were Citizen's charter (1997) and PDS (control) order, 2001. In addition to it, a number of plan schemes like construction of godowns, the integrated information system for foodgrain management, strengthening of PDS through food credit cards/ computerization of PDS and village Grain Bank Scheme were also intiated. Further innovations introduced include the introduction of food stamps, multi-application smart cards and web-enabled systems (GOI, 2008). The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) emphasized the role of Innovative programmes and policies at the Centre as well as in the States. It is for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to permeate in the country and help India to achieve its objective of more inclusive and faster growth. The expansion of Aadhaar numbers through the Unique Identification Authority of India (VIDAi), and the associated opening of bank accounts, which allows the possibility of transferring benefits to the beneficiaries through bank accounts were also part of this goal (GOI, 2013).

**3.3 PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN KERALA**

Public distribution system is primarily a social welfare and antipoverty programme of the government of India. Essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, Kerosene are supplied to the people under the public distribution system at subsidized prices. It has been one of the most important elements in India’s safety net systems for almost 50 years. Public distribution system provides rationed amounts of basic food items and other non-food products at below market prices to consumers through a network of fair price shops disseminated in the country. With a network of more than 400,000 fair price shops (FPS) under the PDS in India is perhaps the largest distribution machinery of the world. The PDS distribute the commodities with more than Rs. 15,000 crores to about 16 crores families each year. The success of this huge network is dependent on its ability to translate a macro level self-sufficiency to a micro level by ensuring availability of food grains for poor households. The public distribution system is considered as the principal instrument in the hands of government for providing a safety net to the poor and the down trodden. The system serves triple objectives namely protecting the poor, enhancing the nutritional status and generating a moderate influence on market price. Thus the main objective of public distribution system can be summarized as maintaining price stability, raising the welfare of the poor, rationing during situations of scarcity of keeping a check on private trade.

In 1991, around 95 percent of all households were covered by the public distribution system and possessed a ration card. Though the number of ration cards issued alone does not necessarily translate to mean that all these cardholders are using the ration cards. This is the measure used by most studies to calculate the reach and coverage of the public distribution system. At the same time, Kerala’s public distribution system was internationally acclaimed as being a model system worth emulating by the other states in the country. The quantity of food grains purchased from the public distribution system has been higher than in most other states, making a significant contribution to household nutrition. The annual purchase of grain from the public distribution system in Kerala provides about one half of the cereal requirements of a person. The monthly entitlement of food grain per adult was 13.8Kg and satisfying the minimum requirement of 370 Grams of cereals per person per day in Kerala recommended by the Indian 99 Council of Medical Research. The functioning of ration shops and the delivery system has been better than in other parts of the country and this is reflected in consumer surveys. Given the scale and effectiveness of the public distribution system, it has been noted that the public distribution system has contributed to an improvement in consumption and nutrition in Kerala.

**3.4 REFORMS AND PERFORMANCE OF FAIR PRICE SHOPS IN KERALA**

The Fair Price Shop (FPS) or ration shop is an important link that connects the government to the beneficiaries for the distribution of essential commodities through PDS. The previous chapter was about the demand side of PDS, based on the feedback on PDS utilization and preference analysis between PDS and cash transfer scheme from the beneficiary households who are the ration card holders. An efficient working of the PDS needs to have a perfect understanding of beneficiary part and the service delivery mechanism through PDS outlets. As a crucial step for analyzing the functioning and reforms of the fair price shop, a primary survey was conducted among the ration shops in the study area of the household survey in rural, urban and tribal regions of Thiruvananthapuram and Malappuram districts.

**3.5 PROFILE OF PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN KERALA**

Public Distribution System is relevant for the state, where there is more than 75per cent deficit in food grain production. Only 15 per cent of the food grains required produced here and the rest is met from other States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat etc. The Public Distribution System came into existence in the State from 1st July 1966 with the implementation of Kerala Rationing Order, 1966. The coverage of ration population is nearly hundred percent.

The prime objective of the Civil supplies Department is to run the Public distribution System in an effective manner and to ensure that rationed articles are made available to consumers at subsidized prices fixed by the Government. The department is also responsible for ensuring availability of essential commodities in the market at reasonable prices as well as to prevent unfair trade practices like hoarding, undue profiteering and blackmarketing The Civil Supplies Department has to administer a PDS that caters to the needs of 76,28,656 ration cardholders (as on August 2015) by making available rationed articles at subsidized price through a network of 332 Authorized Wholesale Dealers, 286 Kerosene Wholesale Distributors and 14,265 Authorized Retail Dealers.

**3.6 e-PoS SYSTEM**

Information and communication technologies in public administration and social welfare initiatives are increasingly being used by various countries with intent to augment transparency and provide better services to citizens. However, lack of infrastructure, education, technology literacy, and training keeps a major proportion of target population deprived of the benefits of these initiatives in various developing countries. Hence services of technology intermediaries are utilized to bridge this gap between the benefits of e- government technologies and citizens.

e-Government aims to improve the relationship between people and their government by making public services more effective, accessible, and responsive to people’s needs as well as by increasing the transparency of public institutions. Effective implementation, adoption, utilization, and maintenance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide services to their constituents is a major challenge faced by governments of various nations. This challenge is increased in developing countries due to lack of technology literacy, limited infrastructure, improper training, and social, cultural and gender disparities. This compels the government institutions to utilize the services of technology intermediaries who are often the primary users of ICTs in e-governance. Services of intermediaries are widely used in India to provide a better access of e- governance initiatives to general population. One such program that utilizes the services of technology intermediaries is the public distribution system (PDS), specifically in the state of Kerala,India.

Food insecurity is a serious challenge worldwide. India accounts for one-fourth of the 795 million undernourished in the world and therefore any global impact on world hunger requires progress in food and nutrition security in the country. The Public Distribution System (PDS) is the biggest poverty alleviation program under which the federal and state governments provide food grains and other essential commodities (like sugar, salt, kerosene, etc.) to below poverty line households through the world’s largest food distribution network of fair price shops. However, a major portion of available grain is lost in distribution due to leakages, diversion and black marketing. Distribution of entitlements is the responsibility of state governments who lift the grains from federal warehouses and allocate them to beneficiaries through fair price shops. The government of India aims to computerize the fair price shops for efficient commodity distribution.

The state of has been proactive in implementing various administrative and technological reforms to empower end-beneficiaries of the PDS supply chain, increase transparency, extend coverage of PDS and improve delivery of entitlements. Two major technological advances introduced in Kerala were the overall computerization of PDS supply chain in and implementation Centralized Online Real-time Electronic Public Distribution System(COREPDS).

Prior to the implementation of COREPDS, each beneficiary was linked to one fair price shop and had no option but to buy entitlements from that shop. This created a forced monopoly of fair price owners leading to exploitation of beneficiaries. COREPDS aimed at empowering beneficiaries by providing them the right to choose the fair price shop from which they could purchase their entitlements. Since each fair price shop owner receives commission based on the quantity of commodities sold, therefore the fear of losing beneficiaries forced them to provide better services. In addition to this, all fair price shops were equipped with electronic point of sale (e-PoS) devices for easier commodity tracking, increased transparency, efficient beneficiary identification and real-time transaction recording. Fair price shop salespersons are the primary users of e-PoS devices and therefore, act as intermediaries between government agencies and beneficiaries.

In this system, only authentic person can be recovered ration materials from ration shops based on the amount available in the database. The traditional PDS is used to distribute grocery items to India's poor people who are valid ration card holders. The validity and the allocation of the ration cards are monitored by the state governments. It contains separate record for each family which includes details like number of members in family, names of the members, head of the family, permanent address, present living address, and phone number. The main reason for using this Biometric system and making this process computerized is to remove the drawbacks of the present way of issuing products based on ration card. The main drawback in the current system is that the PDS has been criticised for its urban bias and its failure to serve the poorer sections of the population effectively. The targeted PDS is costly and gives rise to much corruption in the process of extricating the poor from those who are less needy. Also many retail shopkeepers have large number of bogus cards to sell food grains in the open market. Many FPS dealers resort to malpractice since they acquire less salary. Most of the times users do not get their rightful entitlement in terms of quantity what's meant for them or the farm produce procured by the FPS's is diverted to the open market. So in order to avoid all these drawbacks we are going to use the Biometric base Smart ration card which will help us to avoid the corruption in PDS if not eradicate it.

**INDIA’S FOOD SAFETY NET AND MEASURES FOR COVID-19**

With high levels of income inequality reflected in India’s score on Gini index, food insecurity in the country has been a challenge.8 Findings from the comprehensive national nutrition survey (2016-18) suggest that around 35% of children below 5 years of age are stunted and 33% of them are underweight. The national food security act (NFSA), enacted in 2013, marked a paradigm shift in addressing the problem of food security - from a welfare approach to a right-based approach. The act relies on the country’s public distribution system (PDS) to ensure access to food with a targeted approach to identify entitled people. Furthermore, NFSA includes integrated child development services (ICDS), mid-day meal (MDM), and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) schemes.

Under the PDS, the government provides 35 kg of food grains to every Antyodaya Anna Yojana household (poorest of the poor) per month and 5 kg of food grains to every member of priority household (poor and vulnerable section) per month through a network of 5,00,000 fair price shops (FPS) in the country. These food grains are provided at a highly subsidised rate of Rs 3/kg for rice, Rs 2/kg for wheat and Rs 1/kg for coarse grains by the central government. PDS covers around 800 million entitled people in the country. NFSA has served to improve the general functioning of PDS to a huge extent. It has led to increased coverage of entitled people, a decline in exclusion error, a rise in the purchase-entitlement ratio and improvements in the transportation of food grains where states undertook proactive measures. In the current situation, the Indian government has declared that it has got surplus food grains of 435 lakh tons as on 23rd March 2020 of which 272.19 lakh tons is rice and 162.79 lakh tons is wheat.

The PDS requirement for April is about 135 lakh tons of rice and 74.2 lakh tons of wheat. There is an availability of 646 lakh tons of food grains in the stock, which is 435 lakh tons more than the required. The government has enough supply to meet the demand and states can lift the quota in advance. Ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution, government of India, is the key ministry and is at the frontline during this pandemic. The central government has announced several measures to deal with the food security situation in the country because of the pandemic and the associated lockdown. Some of these measures are as below. Free distribution of additional 5 kg food grains per person and 1 kg of pulses per household under PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana scheme for next 3 months to 800 million entitled people covered under NFSA 2013 ( Ref. FP No.7-1/2019(ii)-BP.III dated 30th March 2020) and they can lift quota of subsidised food grains for six months in one go. States and Union Territories have been allowed to lift food grains for three months in advance from food corporation of India (FCI) with close monitoring.

In addition to the steps taken by the central government, different state governments have also taken steps at their level as below. The Tamil Nadu government has issued an order to distribute Rs 1000/- each to rice cardholders and to supply rice, tur dal, oil, and sugar to all entitled families through FPS free of cost in April 2020. The token system will be adopted to avoid overcrowding at FPSs. Autorickshaw drivers, construction workers, and registered pavement hawkers will get a cash grant of Rs 1,000. Families of migrant workers, construction workers, and autorickshaw drivers have been handpicked by the Tamil Nadu government to be provided with 15 kgs of rice, 1 kg of dal, and free cooking oil. Gujarat state government has decided to distribute 3.5 kg wheat and 1.5 kg rice per person and 1 kg pulse, 1 kg sugar and 1 kg salt per family free of cost from 1st April 2020, to all the ration cardholders.

Extremely poor migrant workers from other states who came to Gujarat for jobs will also get food grains kit free-of-cost under Annapurna Yojana in April 2020 from the 17,000 FPSs in the state. The Uttar Pradesh government is providing free ration to all the PDS ration cardholders. Nearly 522 community kitchens have been set up to provide food to the needy. The government has ramped up to 26,298 mobile vans and manual carts for doorstep delivery of fruits and vegetables.

In Kerala, entitled people will continue to get the 30 kg of food grains, as mandated under PDS, along with the kit prepared by the state. The kit will have rice, wheat, sugar, salt, edible oil, pulses, and spices. Those entitled to get 2 kg of rice at subsidised rates now get 15 kg of rice for free. To prevent crowding, the government has devised a card number system for the distribution of ration.

**CHAPTER – IV**

**DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

**TABLE NO. 4.1**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **CATEGORY** | **Count** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Rice | 51 | 42.86 |
| Wheat | 32 | 26.89 |
| Kerosene | 18 | 15.13 |
| Kadala | 18 | 15.13 |
| **Total** | **119** | **100** |

**TYPE OF GOOD GRAINS GOT DURING COVID 19**

**CHART NO. 4.1**

**TYPE OF GOOD GRAINS GOT DURING COVID 19**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows the which type of grains got from the shop during COVID 19. 42.86% of respondents get rice, 26.89% of respondents get Wheat, 15.13% of respondents get Kerosene, 15.13% of respondents get Kadala.

**TABLE NO. 4.2**

**OPINION ABOUT QUALITY OF GOODS PROVIDED BY GOVT. DURING THE COVID**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Good | 28 | 56 |
| Moderate | 22 | 44 |
| **Total** | **119** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.2**

**OPINION ABOUT QUALITY OF GOODS PROVIDED BY GOVT. DURING THE COVID**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about the quality of goods provided by Govt. during the Covid 19 Pandemic. 56% of respondents opinioned it is Good, 44% of respondents opinioned that the goods are moderate.

**TABLE NO. 4.3**

**SUFFICIENT QUANTITY OF FOOD GRAINS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| OPTIONS | NO. OF RESPONDENTS | PERCENTAGE |
| Yes | 48 | 56 |
| No | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 119 | 100 |

**CHART NO. 4.3**

**SUFFICIENT QUANTITY OF FOOD GRAINS**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about getting sufficient quantity of food during the pandemic era. 56% of respondents stated that they got sufficient quantity of food grains only 4% respondents did not get sufficient quantity of food grains.

**TABLE NO. 4.4**

**PMGY POLICY EFFECTIVE OR NOT**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| OPTIONS | NO. OF RESPONDENTS | PERCENTAGE |
| Yes | 40 | 80 |
| No | 10 | 20 |
| Total | 119 | 100 |

**CHART NO. 4.4**

**PMGY POLICY EFFECTIVE OR NOT**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows 80% of respondents stated that PMGY policy is effective and 20% of respondents say that the PMGY policy is not effective.

**TABLE NO. 4.5**

**REGULARITY FOR GETTING GOODS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Yes | 45 | 90 |
| No | 5 | 10 |
| **Total** | **119** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.5**

**REGULARITY FOR GETTING GOODS**

**Interpretation**

Table shows opinion about regularity for getting goods. 90% of respondents said that they got the foods regularly and 10% of respondents said that they did not get the foods regularly.

**TABLE NO. 4.6**

**EXPERIENCED SHORTAGE OF FOOD GRAINS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Yes | 4 | 8 |
| No | 46 | 92 |
| **Total** | **119** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.6**

**EXPERIENCED SHORTAGE OF FOOD GRAINS**

**Interpretation**

Table shows opinion about experienced any shortage of food grains. 92% of respondents have not experienced any shortage of food grains and only 8% of respondents have experienced with the shortage of food grains .

**TABLE NO. 4.7**

**DIFFERENCE IN FREQUENCY OF VISITING PDS SHOP**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Yes | 30 | 60 |
| No | 20 | 40 |
| **Total** | **119** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.7**

**DIFFERENCE IN FREQUENCY OF VISITING PDS SHOP**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about the difference in frequency of visiting PDS shop before and during the time of Covid. 60% of respondents stated that there is difference in frequency of visiting and 40% of respondents said there is no difference in frequency of visiting PDS shops during the pandemic period.

**TABLE NO. 4.8**

**PROBLEM WHILE VISITING THE SHOP**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Timing of PDS | 11 | 22 |
| Technical Problem | 20 | 40 |
| Level of Availability | 9 | 18 |
| Others if any | 5 | 10 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.8**

**PROBLEM WHILE VISITING THE SHOP**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows problem while visiting the shop. 22% of respondents say that they faced problems with the timing of PDS 40% of respondents faced problems with technical issues, 18% of respondents faced problem with level of availability and 10% of respondents faced other problems.

**TABLE NO. 4.9**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Transportation problem | 10 | 20 |
| Non Availability of sanitizer | 3 | 6 |
| Problem in computerized system | 16 | 32 |
| Timing of PDS | 13 | 26 |
| Availability of Goods | 5 | 10 |
| Others | 3 | 6 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**DIFFICULTY PURCHASING GOOD DURING COVID 19**

**CHART NO. 4.9**

**DIFFICULTY PURCHASING GOOD DURING COVID 19**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows difficulty faced by the respondents while purchasing during covid 19. 20% of respondents faced transportation problem, 6% of respondents faced non availability of sanitizer, 32% of respondents faced problem in computerized system, 26% of respondents faced Timing of PDS, 10% of respondents faced availability of Goods and 6% of respondents faced other problems

**TABLE NO. 4.10**

**FREE KIT IS USEFUL OR NOT**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Poor | 0 | 0 |
| Fair | 15 | 30 |
| Good | 35 | 70 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.10**

**FREE KIT IS USEFUL OR NOT**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about the free kit is useful or not. 30% of respondents opinioned that the free Kit is fairly useful, 70% of respondents have good opinion and none of them have poor opinion about the usefulness of Free kit.

**TABLE NO. 4.11**

**TIMING OF PDS SHOP DURING COVID 19 IS FAVOURABLE**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Yes | 40 | 80 |
| No | 10 | 20 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.11**

**TIMING OF PDS SHOP DURING COVID 19 IS FAVOURABLE**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about the timing of PDS shop during Covid 19. 80% of respondents opinioned that the timing of PDS Shops during covid 19 is favourable and 20% of respondents opinioned the timing is not favourable.

**TABLE NO. 4.12**

**FACING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH PURCHASING GOODS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Never | 5 | 10 |
| Sometimes | 45 | 90 |
| Always | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.12**

**FACING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS WITH PURCHASING GOODS**

**Interpretation**

Table shows opinion about facing technical problems with purchasing goods. 90% of respondents faced technical problems sometimes, 10% of respondents never faced technical problems.

**TABLE NO. 4.13**

**GOODS PROVIDED THROUGH FREE KIT HAVE GOOD QUALITY**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Good | 24 | 48 |
| Moderate | 26 | 52 |
| Bad | 0 | 0 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**CHART NO. 4.13**

**GOODS PROVIDED THROUGH FREE KIT HAVE GOOD QUALITY**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about goods provided through free kit have a good quality. 48% of respondents opinioned that it has good quality, 52% of respondents say quality of the goods are moderate and none of them opinioned that the quality of goods are bad.

**TABLE NO. 4.14**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **COUNT** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Sugar | 49 | 11.75 |
| Wheat | 32 | 7.67 |
| Kadala | 44 | 10.55 |
| Soap | 31 | 7.43 |
| Tea powder | 43 | 10.31 |
| Salt | 43 | 10.31 |
| Chilly powder | 41 | 9.83 |
| Parippu | 41 | 9.83 |
| Rava | 19 | 4.56 |
| Mustard | 36 | 8.63 |
| Others | 38 | 9.11 |
| **Total** | **417** | **100** |

**TYPE OF FOOD GRAINS GET FROM THE FREE KIT**

**CHART NO. 4.14**

**TYPE OF FOOD GRAINS GET FROM THE FREE KIT**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows type of food grains get from the Free Kit. 11.75% of respondents say that they get Sugar, 7.67% of respondents got wheat, 10.55% of respondents get Kadala, 7.43% of respondents get soap, 10.31% of respondents get tea powder, 10.31% of respondents get salt, 9.83% of respondents get Parippu, 4.56% of respondents get Rava, 8.63% of respondents get Mustard, 9.11% of respondents get other goods.

**TABLE NO. 4.15**

**ITEMS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FREE KIT ENOUGH TO MEET HOUSEHOLD NEEDS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **OPTIONS** | **NO. OF RESPONDENTS** | **PERCENTAGE** |
| Adequate | 19 | 38 |
| Not adequate | 10 | 20 |
| Moderately adequate | 21 | 42 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**TABLE NO. 4.15**

**ITEMS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FREE KIT ENOUGH TO MEET HOUSEHOLD NEEDS**

**Interpretation**

Above table shows opinion about the free kit enough to meet the household needs. 38% of respondents say it is adequate, 20% of respondents say it is not adequate, and 42% of respondents say it is moderately adequate.

**CHAPTER –V**

**FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION**

**5.1 FINDINGS**

* 42.86% of respondents got rice during Covid 19.
* 56% of respondents opinioned that the quality of goods provided by Govt. during the Covid 19 Pandemic is good.
* 56% of respondents stated that they got sufficient quantity of food grains
* 80% of respondents stated that PMGY policy is effective
* 90% of respondents said that they got the foods regularly
* 92% of respondents have not experienced any shortage of food grains
* 60% of respondents stated that there is difference in frequency of visiting
* 40% of respondents faced problems with technical issues while visiting the shop.
* 20% of respondents faced transportation problem while purchasing during covid 19.
* 70% of respondents have good opinion and none of them have poor opinion about the usefulness of Free kit.
* 80% of respondents opinioned that the timing of PDS Shops during covid 19 is favourable
* 90% of respondents faced technical problems sometimes with purchasing goods
* 52% of respondents say quality of the goods is moderate and none of them opinioned that the quality of goods is bad.
* 11.75% of respondents say that they get Sugar.
* 42% of respondents said that they get moderately enough items to meet the household needs.

**5.2 SUGGESTIONS**

* The government of India with the state governments can organize village wise procurement at minimum support price
* There is a need to give some more relaxation to the agriculture sector during the lockdown so that farmers can start harvesting immediately.
* Social distancing at ration shops can be maintained by placing guiding markers in front of the shops.
* For community awareness about the new entitlements and COVID-19, social distancing, hand sanitization, etc. social media-based messages to the PDS shop keepers and to beneficiaries can be provided.
* Foot-operated sanitization stations can be installed in the PDS centers

**5.3 CONCLUSION**

Food security exists when all people, at all time, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.15 In the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, all the public resources are concentrated on mitigating the extent of damage. Further, economic activities are likely to remain at a low key in the coming months. The government should make policies to support the small and marginal farmers, wage laborers and migrant workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the whole world to face an economic crisis and hence putting people even more at risk of food insecurity; supply chain setup has been disrupted severely due to numerous transport restrictions. There is a need for various components of government machinery to work in complete synergy for aligning services, making provision for supplies and arranging means of delivery to the citizens.

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**WEBSITES**

* <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347409189_PUBLIC_DISTRIBUTION_SYSTEM_AND_COVID-19_A_NARRATIVE_REVIEW>

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Personal details:

Name :

1.PDS shop no :

2.Locality/place :

3.Type of ration card :

4.No. of members in the card :

5.Occupation of the card holder :

6.Income as per the card :

1)Which type of food grains did you get from the shop during covid 19?

Rice

Wheat

Kerosene

kadala

2)Is the goods provided by Govt. through PDS during the covid pandemichave good quality ?

•Good

•Moderate

•Bad

3)Do you get sufficient quantity of food grains?

•Yes

•No

4)Is the PMGY policy effective or not?

•Yes

•No

5)Is there any regularity for getting goods?

•Yes

•No

6)Have you experience any shortage of food grains?

•Yes

•No

7)Is there any difference in frequency of visiting PDS shop before andduring the time of covid?

•Yes

•No

8)Have any problem while visiting the shop?

•Timing of PDS

•Technical problems

•Level of availability

•Other if any

9)Did you feel any difficulty while purchasing goods during covid 19?

•Transportation problem

•Non availability of sanitizers

•Problem in computerized system

•Timing of PDS

•Availability of goods

•Other if any

10)Whether the free kit is useful or not?

•Poor

•Fair

•Bad

11)Is the timing of PDS shop during covid 19 is favourable or not?

•Yes

•No

12)Did you feel any technical problem while purchasing

Goods?

•Never

•Sometimes

•Always

13)Is the goods provided through free kit have good

Quality?

•Good

•Moderate

•Bad

14)Which type of food grains did you get from the free

Kit?

Sugar

Wheat

Kadala

soap

Teapowder

salt

Chilly powder

parippu

Rava

Mustard

15)Are the items availale through the free kit enough to meethousehold needs?

•Adequate

•Not adequate

•Moderatly adequate