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Awareness level of beneficiaries under the national food security act (NFSA) programme in Odisha

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Abstract

The Government of India has enacted the National Food Security Act (NFSA) on September 12, 2013. The NFSA aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's population. The legislation is a landmark, and perhaps the largest food security program in the world. In September, 2013, India passed the National Food Security Act (NFSA), making its food safety net programmes one of the largest in the world. It was satisfactory to learn that all the sample beneficiaries opined that they knew the selection criteria under the Act to get the food grains. It was a matter of great concern that, the rural beneficiaries had negligible awareness about the issue of duplicate cards through online facility. This may reasoned out for lack of cyber or online facilities and knowledge of the rural people. It is a matter of concern that about one-fourth of the beneficiaries had partial knowledge on the inputs of the programme, and mass awareness campaign and sensitization programmes by the stakeholders should be regularly conducted to make them aware about their entitlement of food grains. There was no significant difference (non-significant CR value) among the two samples regarding the awareness of price of commodities given to them. It was a matter of great satisfaction that, almost all the beneficiaries under the rural and urban areas were aware about the prices of commodities supplied to them.

Keywords: Awareness, NFSA beneficiaries.

1. Introduction

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) is an act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidized food grains to the beneficiaries. The scheme under the act is meant to provide food to the poorest of poor, pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children. The fruitfulness of the act is only visible if the intended beneficiaries would get the real benefits of the welfare programme. The awareness of the community, particularly the target population is utmost important here, because lack of awareness and exposure many a times hinder the pace of development of welfare programmes.

Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) has been initiated by the Government of India from the year 1992 in order to serve and provide essential commodities to the people living in remote, backward and hilly areas. Government introduced Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in the year 1997. Central Government and State Governments have been actively involved in steering the operations for the success of the PDS. The Government of India has enacted the National Food Security Act (NFSA) on September 12, 2013. The NFSA aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's population. The legislation is a landmark, and perhaps the largest food security program in the world. In September, 2013, India passed the National Food Security Act (NFSA), making its food safety net programmes one of the largest in the world.

2. Materials and Methods

For the study, survey as well as Ex-Post Facto research was considered most appropriate to gather data. Multiphase sampling technique was adopted to select the districts, blocks, panchayats, villages and respondents. As the research study was subjective and analytical in nature, the survey research had been conducted through structured interview schedule and data collection from the sample beneficiaries of Cuttack district.

The data was obtained from 150 beneficiaries from rural and 150 beneficiaries from urban sample areas. Random sampling procedure was followed for selection of blocks, villages and sample respondents of the programme. The data was obtained from a total of 300 beneficiaries from 10 randomly selected villages of the sample area (5 from rural and 5 villages from urban blocks).

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3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Awareness on selection: Awareness was the prime factor of consideration in the evaluation study of any developmental programme. To take the full possible advantage of the act the beneficiaries should be aware about the NFSA and the

benefits attached with the act. The researcher had tried to assess the awareness level of the beneficiaries on the identification criteria of availing benefits under NFSA. The response was depicted below-

Table 1: Awareness of beneficiaries about identification criteria under NFSA

Sl. No.	Category	Rural(n1=150)		Urban(n2=150)		Pooled(n=300)		C. R value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Know the criteria	150	100	150	100	300	100	0
2	Do not know	0	0	0	0	0	0	

It was satisfactory to learn that all the sample beneficiaries opined that they knew the selection criteria under the Act to get the food grains. Among the rural respondents it was observed that, they were mostly aware about the commodities given by the government and the amount of the goods. But most of them were not aware about the Act details and the modalities of the distribution system under the Act. While discussing with the urban sample beneficiaries it was found out that, most of them were fully aware about all the modalities of the PDS and the benefits there off.

3.2 Awareness on duplicate card: The provision of issue of duplicate card was also one crucial intervention of the Act and the procedure of issue of duplicate card should be known to the beneficiaries because most often the chance of loss of card was possible particularly with the rural beneficiaries. Therefore, the effort was also made in this study to identify the awareness level of the beneficiaries about the duplicate card through online facility.

Table 2: Awareness of beneficiaries about duplicate card through online facility

Sl. No.	Category	Rural(n1=150)		Urban(n2=150)		Pooled(n=300)		C. R value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Know the criteria	20	13.33	135	90	155	51.67	33.92**
2	Do not know	130	86.67	15	10	145	48.33	

It was found out that, only 13.33% of the rural beneficiaries were knowing the online facility for duplicate card whereas, only 90% of the urban beneficiaries were aware about the facility. It was a matter of great concern that, the rural beneficiaries had negligible awareness about the issue of duplicate cards through online facility. This may be reasoned out for lack of cyber or online facilities and knowledge of the rural people.

A very high significant CR value between the two samples clearly implied that the awareness level of the rural and urban sample differ significantly with respect to the online facility of duplicate card.

3.3. Awareness on commodities: The National Food Security Act, 2013 (also Right to Food Act) is an Act of the Parliament of India which aims to provide subsidized food grains to approximately two thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India.

Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children are eligible for daily free cereals. An attempt was made by the researcher to analyse the awareness of the beneficiaries on the commodities distributed under the scheme.

Table 3: Awareness about the types of commodities distributed to beneficiary under NFSA

Sl. No.	Category	Rural(n1=150)		Urban(n2=150)		Pooled(n=300)		C. R value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Full awareness	98	65.33	132	88	230	76.67	6.68**
2	Part awareness	52	34.67	18	12	70	23.33	
3	No awareness	0	0	0	0	0	0	

It was found out that, 65.33% of the rural beneficiaries were fully aware about the type of commodities (grains) distributed under the programme. But a sizable portion of rural sample respondents (34.67%) had partial knowledge on the type of grains distributed to the people. It was further observed that the respondents who had part knowledge on the issue were mostly, old, localite and very little contact with the electronic or print media. Due to their negligible exposure the awareness level was less compared to others. Regarding the urban sample it was observed that, a good portion of beneficiaries (88%) knew about the types of food grains distributed among the people under this scheme.

The pooled data revealed that, 76.67% of the beneficiaries had full knowledge on the commodities distributed and rest 23.33% had partial knowledge on the issue. It is a matter of

concern that about one-fourth of the beneficiaries had partial knowledge on the inputs of the programme, and mass awareness campaign and sensitization programmes by the stakeholders should be regularly conducted to make them aware about their entitlement of food grains.

3.4. Awareness on price of the commodities

Table 4: Awareness about the price of commodities under NFSA

Sl. No.	Category	Rural (n1=150)		Urban (n2=150)		Pooled (n=300)		C. R value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Full awareness	145	96.67	140	93.33	285	95	0.98NS
2	Part awareness	5	3.33	10	6.67	15	5	
3	No awareness	0	0	0	0	0	0	

It is indeed a good sign that the beneficiaries under the PDS component of NFSA had reasonable awareness on several parameters of the Act and the commodities distributed to them. A huge total of 93.33% of the urban and 96.67% of rural beneficiaries had full awareness on the price of commodities supplied to them through PDS. However, in rural sample area few of the respondents (3.33%) had part awareness on the said matter due to the old age, less outward orientation and lack of exposure to media.

There was no significant difference (non-significant CR value) among the two samples regarding the awareness of

price of commodities given to them. It was a matter of great satisfaction that, almost all the beneficiaries under the rural and urban areas were aware about the prices of commodities supplied to them.

3.5. Awareness on process of application

There was a procedural norm for application for the duplicate ration card if original is lost or damaged. A beneficiary to get the benefit should know about the procedure of application for the same.

Table 5: Awareness of beneficiaries about process of applying for new/duplicate card

Sl. No.	Category	Rural(n1=150)		Urban(n2=150)		Pooled(n=300)		C. R value
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1	Know the process	53	35.33	120	80	173	57.67	13.18**
2	Do not know	97	64.67	15	20	117	42.33	

The collected data revealed that, small portion (35.33%) of the rural beneficiaries knew about the process of application for new ration card if the card is lost. Among the urban sample 80% knew the process. From the total beneficiaries, 42.33% did not know the process of applying for the new/duplicate ration card.

It was also found out that the significant CR value between the two samples denoted the fact that, the urban beneficiaries were more aware about the process of obtaining the duplicate card than the rural beneficiaries.

4. Conclusion

Public Distribution System (PDS) is a poverty alleviation programme and contributes towards the social welfare of the people. Essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene and the like are supplied to the people under the PDS at reasonable prices. PDS is a boon to the people living below the poverty line. PDS is the primary social welfare and antipoverty programme of the Government of India.

It was satisfactory to learn that all the sample beneficiaries opined that they knew the selection criteria under the Act to get the food grains. Among the rural respondents it was observed that, they were mostly aware about the commodities given by the government and the amount of the goods.

While discussing with the urban sample beneficiaries it was found out that, most of them were fully aware about all the modalities of the PDS and the benefits there off. It was a matter of great concern that, the rural beneficiaries had negligible awareness about the issue of duplicate cards through online facility. This may be reasoned out for lack of cyber or online facilities and knowledge of the rural people. It is a matter of concern that about one-fourth of the beneficiaries had partial knowledge on the inputs of the programme, and mass awareness campaign and sensitization programmes by the stakeholders should be regularly conducted to make them aware about their entitlement of food grains.

There was no significant difference (non-significant CR value) among the two samples regarding the awareness of price of commodities given to them. It was a matter of great satisfaction that, almost all the beneficiaries under the rural and urban areas were aware about the prices of commodities supplied to them. It was also found out that the significant CR value between the two samples denoted the fact that, the urban beneficiaries were more aware about the process of obtaining the duplicate card than the rural beneficiaries.

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