

Consumer Rights on Fair Price Shops in Tuticorin District-An Empirical Study

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Public Distribution System is primarily a social welfare and antipoverty programmed of the Government of India. With a network of more than 400,000 Fair Price Shops (FPS), the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India is perhaps the largest distribution machinery of its type in the world. Fair price shops are run predominantly by cooperatives and a limited number of fair price shops by Tamilnadu Civil Supplies Corporation. With a view to encourage rural women folk and to improve their living standards, Government has permitted women self-help groups to run fair price shops.

Introduction

It is now universally accepted that the level of consumer rights and protection is a true indicator of the development of a country and the progressiveness of its civil society. The reasons for universal acceptance of consumer rights and protection, as often cited, are: the rapidly increasing variety of goods and services which modern technology has made available; the growing size and complexity of production and distribution system; high level of sophistication in marketing and selling practices in advertising and other forms of promotion; removal of personal relationship between buyer and seller as a result of mass marketing methods and consumers' increased mobility. Above all, the growing consumer awareness about their rights, consciousness and concern for value for money have contributed to the emergence of universal acceptance of the need for protection and promotion of consumer rights.

The number of fair price shops run by women self-help groups is 646 as on 31.3.09. Similarly, village panchayats have also been authorized to run fair price shops. 30,036 fair price shops comprising 23,568 full time shops and 6468 part-time shops are functioning in Tamilnadu. The Government has opened 1250 additional part time fair price shops and 148 new shops from 01.06.2006 to 31.03.2009. This has improved the accessibility of public distribution system to cardholders. Present study will show how for the consumers have been benefited in FPS and consumer awareness about their rights in terms of the objectives of FPS.

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of the present study are:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of FPS consumers.

2. To study the problems relating to the implementations of the FPS.
3. To study the benefits derived out of FPS.
4. To offer suggestions to improve the working of FPS.

Methodology and Sampling

Present study is empirical in nature and will be studied using primary data. Survey method was followed for this study. Three Villages from Tuticorin District Viz, Puthukkottai, Meelavittan, and Attimarapatti were selected for this study. From Tuticorin District 180 respondents (90 below poverty line consumers and 90 above poverty line consumers) were selected using simple random sampling. The data relates to the month of December 2010. A pre-tested interview schedule covering all aspects of FPS was administered among the respondents to elicit the needed information. The effectiveness of fair price shops is measured based on the responses given by the respondents of this study. Percentage analysis, averages, chi-square tests, Cramer's V and probability analysis were used.

Results and discussion

Fair price shops is measured based on the responses given by the respondents of this study. The respondents of the study are categorized into below poverty line consumers and above poverty line consumers.

Sex-wise distribution of the respondents

The purpose of this analysis is to identify the relative role of male and female in purchasing the commodities from the FPS. The established fact is that female members largely influence the purchasing behaviour of the family. This is also true in the case of FPS (Table 1).

The present study found that more than 60% of the respondents were female. This analysis shows that in all villages the percentage of the female respondents were more in the case of the BPL sections. The result of chi-Square analysis ($\chi^2=0.1$, $P=0.7518$) revealed that there is no significant relationship between sex and fair price

Table 1. Sex-wise distribution of respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Male	6 (20)	9 (30)	12 (40)	4 (13.33)	14 (46.67)	22 (73.33)	32 (35.56)	35 (38.89)	67 (37.22)
Female	24 (80)	21 (70)	18 (60)	26 (86.67)	16 (53.33)	8 (26.67)	58 (64.44)	55 (61.11)	113 (62.78)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=1$, $P=0.7518$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.0342$)

Educational status wise distribution of the respondents

Education as a key social factor plays a dominant role in molding the behaviour of the respondents (Table 3).

This study found that 76.11% of the respondents in all the sample villages were literate. Further, the respondents with no formal education were high among BP than APL. This study found that 76.11% of the respondents in all the sample villages were literate. Further, the respondents with no formal education were high among BP than APL.

shop consumers in Tuticorin District. The present study found that more than 60% of the respondents were female. This analysis shows that in all villages the percentage of the female respondents were more in the case of the BPL sections. The result chi-Square analysis of ($c^2=0.1$, $P=0.7518$) revealed that there is no significant relationship between sex and fair price shop consumers in Tuticorin District.

Age-wise distribution of the respondents

Age is the important factor, which also decides the purchasing behaviour of an individual and establishes the relationship with the market (Table 2).

Table 2. Age-wise distribution of respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Up to 35	2 (6.67)	8 (26.67)	4 (13.33)	1 (3.3)	10 (33.33)	3 (10)	16 (17.78)	12 (13.33)	28 (15.56)
35-50	20 (66.67)	12 (40)	17 (56.67)	22 (73.33)	16 (52.33)	18 (60)	53 (58.89)	52 (57.78)	105 (58.33)
Above 50	8 (26.67)	10 (33.33)	9 (30)	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)	9 (30)	21 (23.33)	26 (28.89)	47 (26.11)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=1.11$, $P=.5741$, $df=2$, Cramer's $V=0.0785$)

In the study, it was found that 58% of the respondents in both the categories were in the age group of 35 to 50 years. It shows that the middle age group has been maintaining the relationship with FPS. The chi-square analysis result ($c^2=1.11$, $P=.5741$, Cramer's $V=0.0785$) shows no significant relationship of age and fair price shop consumers in the study area. In the study, it was found that 58% of the respondents in both the categories were in the age group of 35 to 50 years. It shows that the middle age group has been maintaining the relationship with FPS. The chi-square analysis result ($c^2=1.11$, $P=.5741$, Cramer's $V=0.0785$) shows no significant relationship of age and fair price shop consumers in the study area.

The present study found that 77% of the respondents were married and the difference is statistically not significant ($P=.4751$) (Table 4). The present study found that 77% of the respondents were married and the difference is statistically not significant ($P=.4751$) (Table 4).

As far as, the occupation of the respondents is concerned 63% of the respondents in the BPL category were farmers while 58% of the respondents in the APL category were employees in private enterprises (Table 5). As far as, the occupation of the respondents is concerned 63% of the respondents in the BPL category were farmers while 58% of the respondents in the APL

Table 3. Educational Status-wise distribution of respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
No formal education	3 (10)	5 (16.67)	15 (50)	5 (16.67)	11 (36.67)	4 (13.33)	29 (32.22)	14 (15.56)	43 (23.89)
Primary	7 (23.33)	12 (40)	4 (13.33)	8 (26.67)	9 (30)	13 (43.33)	20 (22.22)	33 (36.67)	53 (29.44)
Secondary	16 (53.33)	4 (13.33)	6 (20)	10 (60)	4 (13.33)	9 (30)	26 (28.89)	23 (25.56)	49 (27.22)
College	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	2 (6.67)	1 (3.33)	2 (6.67)	2 (6.67)	5 (5.56)	6 (6.67)	11 (6.11)
Diploma	2 (6.67)	2 (6.67)	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)	4 (4.44)	6 (6.65)	10 (5.56)
Others	1 (3.33)	4 (13.33)	2 (6.67)	3 (6)	3 (10)	1 (3.33)	6 (6.67)	8 (8.87)	14 (7.78)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data.

Table 4. Marital Status of the respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Married	21 (70)	24 (80)	18 (60)	26 (86.67)	28 (93.33)	22 (73.33)	67 (74.44)	72 (80)	139 (77.22)
Unmarried	9 (30)	6 (20)	12 (40)	4 (13.33)	2 (6.67)	8 (26.67)	23 (25.56)	18 (20)	41 (22.78)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=0.51$, $P=.4751$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.0662$)

Table 5. Occupation of the respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Cooley	7 (23.33)	3 (10)	9 (30)	4 (13.33)	6 (20)	2 (6.67)	22 (24.44)	9 (10)	31 (17.22)
Agriculture	18 (60)	4 (13.33)	13 (43.33)	6 (20)	14 (46.67)	3 (10)	45 (50)	13 (14.44)	58 (32.22)
Cattle grazing	1 (3.33)	2 (6.67)	4 (13.33)	3 (10)	1 (3.33)	2 (6.67)	6 (6.67)	7 (7.78)	13 (7.22)
Plantations	2 (6.67)	4 (13.33)	1 (3.33)	4 (13.33)	4 (13.33)	1 (3.33)	7 (7.78)	9 (10)	16 (8.89)
Employees in Private Entrepreneurs	2 (6.67)	17 (56.67)	3 (10)	13 (43.33)	5 (16.67)	22 (73.33)	10 (11.11)	52 (57.78)	62 (34.44)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data.

Table 6. Purchasing behaviour of the respondents

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Controlled	17 (56.67)	15 (50)	12 (40)	8 (26.67)	18 (60)	13 (43.33)	47 (52.22)	36 (40)	83 (46.11)
Non-Controlled	3 (10)	6 (20)	2 (6.67)	3 (10)	5 (16.67)	6 (20)	10 (11.11)	15 (16.67)	25 (13.89)
Both	10 (33.33)	9 (30)	16 (53.33)	19 (63.33)	7 (23.33)	11 (36.67)	33 (36.67)	39 (43.33)	72 (40)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=2.96$, $P=.2276$, $df=2$, Cramer's $V=0.1282$)

Table 7. Availability of goods in time

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Available	8 (26.67)	17 (56.67)	11 (36.67)	16 (53.33)	12 (40)	24 (80)	31 (34.44)	57 (63.33)	88 (48.89)
Not available	22 (73.33)	13 (43.33)	19 (63.33)	14 (46.67)	18 (60)	6 (20)	59 (65.56)	33 (36.67)	92 (51.11)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=13.9$, $P=.0002$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.289$)

Table 8. Satisfaction over the quantity and quality of goods available

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Satisfied	11 (36.67)	8 (26.67)	5 (16.67)	17 (56.67)	3 (10)	9 (30)	19 (21.11)	34 (37.78)	53 (29.44)
Not Satisfied	19 (63.33)	22 (73.33)	25 (83.33)	13 (43.33)	27 (90)	21 (70)	71 (78.89)	56 (62.22)	127 (70.56)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=5.24$, $P=.0221$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.1829$)

category were employees in private enterprises (Table 5).

It was found that 46% of the respondents depended FPS for controlled articles. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=2.96$, $P=.2276$, $df=2$, Cramer's $V=0.1282$) revealed that there is no significant difference between purchasing behaviour and consumers in the study area (Table 6). It

was found that 46% of the respondents depended FPS for controlled articles. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=2.96$, $P=.2276$, $df=2$, Cramer's $V=0.1282$) revealed that there is no significant difference between purchasing behaviour and consumers in the study area (Table 6).

During the study, 51% of the respondents opined that goods were not available in time in all FPS. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=13.9$, $P=.0002$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.289$)

V=0.289) revealed that there is no significant difference between goods available in time and respondents in the study area (Table 7). During the study, 51% of the respondents opined that goods were not available in time in all FPS. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=13.9$, $P=.0002$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.289$) revealed that there is

to BPL of Parappadi and Mannarpuram Villages in particular. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=5.24$, $P=.0221$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.1829$) revealed that there is no significant difference of satisfaction of goods supplied in Tuticorin District (Table 8).

Table 9. Problems in PDS

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Non-availability of goods	6 (20)	5 (16.67)	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)	5 (16.67)	3 (10)	18 (20)	12 (13.33)	30 (16.67)
Poor quality and weight	4 (13.33)	8 (26.67)	3 (10)	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)	5 (16.67)	11 (12.22)	20 (22.22)	31 (17.22)
Non-availability of rations cards	14 (46.67)	2 (6.67)	5 (16.67)	12 (40)	8 (26.67)	7 (23.33)	27 (30)	21 (23.33)	48 (26.67)
Leakages	2 (6.67)	3 (10)	2 (6.67)	5 (16.67)	3 (10)	13 (43.33)	7 (7.78)	21 (23.33)	28 (15.56)
Non-availability of non controlled goods	4 (13.33)	12 (40)	13 (43.33)	2 (6.67)	10 (33.33)	2 (6.67)	27 (30)	16 (17.78)	43 (23.89)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=11.26$, $P=.0238$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.2574$)

Table 10. Suggestions to make PDS more effective

Particulars	Puthukkottai		Meelavittan		Attimarapatti		Total		Grand Total
	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	BPL	APL	
Increase the margin and salary	2 (6.67)	1 (3.33)	4 (13.33)	5 (16.67)	4 (13.33)	5 (16.67)	10 (11.11)	11 (12.22)	21 (11.67)
Reduce number of cards per FPS	2 (6.67)	3 (10)	2 (6.67)	3 (10)	6 (20)	4 (13.33)	10 (11.11)	10 (11.11)	20 (11.11)
Availability of Non-Controlled articles	22 (73.33)	18 (60)	13 (43.33)	10 (33.33)	14 (46.67)	10 (33.33)	49 (54.44)	38 (42.22)	87 (48.33)
Vigilance committees	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	2 (6.67)	5 (16.67)	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	4 (4.44)	11 (12.22)	15 (8.33)
More SHGs	3 (10)	5 (16.67)	9 (30)	7 (23.33)	5 (16.67)	8 (26.67)	17 (18.89)	20 (22.22)	37 (20.56)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)	90 (100)	180 (100)

Source: Primary data. ($\chi^2=4.95$, $P=.2925$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.1658$)

no significant difference between goods available in time and respondents in the study area (Table 7).

Dissatisfaction is high among the respondents belong to BPL in general and among the respondents belonging It was widely opined by the respondents that the goods supplied were inferior in quality and under weight. More than seventy per cent of the respondents were not satisfied over the goods supplied. Dissatisfaction is high among the respondents belong to BPL in general and among the respondents belonging to BPL of Parappadi and Mannarpuram Villages in particular. The result of chi-square- test ($c^2=5.24$, $P=.0221$, $df=1$, Cramer's $V=0.1829$) revealed that there is no significant difference of satisfaction of goods supplied in Tuticorin District (Table 8).

It was widely opined by the respondents that the goods supplied were inferior in quality and under weight. More than seventy per cent of the respondents were not satisfied over the goods supplied.

In general non-availability of ration cards was the major problems for 27% of the respondents, which is followed by non- availability of non-controlled articles (23%), though category wise responses are different, showed no significant difference ($c^2=11.26$, $P=.0238$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.2574$) (Table 9). In general non-availability of ration cards was the major problems for 27% of the respondents, which is followed by non- availability of non-controlled articles (23%), though category wise responses are different, showed no significant difference ($c^2=11.26$, $P=.0238$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.2574$) (Table 9).

48% of respondents opined that to control the open market price, non-controlled articles should be supplied through FPS. This is the major suggestion given by the sample respondents to make PDS more effective. This shows that to make the system more viable and effective,

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the participation of people is important, and the difference is statistically not significant ($\chi^2=4.95$, $P=.2925$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.1658$) (Table 10). 48% of respondents opined that to control the open market price, non-controlled articles should be supplied through FPS. This is the major suggestion given by the sample respondents to make PDS more effective. This shows that to make the system more viable and effective, the participation of people is important, and the difference is statistically not significant ($\chi^2=4.95$, $P=.2925$, $df=4$, Cramer's $V=0.1658$) (Table 10).

Conclusion

To conclude, the best practices of some women SHGs may be emulated and the role of local bodies in running FPS may be strengthened. Here, Cooperatives have been given more roles in running FPS in Tuticorin District. To conclude, the best practices of some women SHGs may be emulated and the role of local bodies in running FPS may be strengthened. Above all the present system of universal system of FPS should be continued as it has control over the market prices of essential commodities. Here, Cooperatives have been given more roles in running FPS in Tuticorin District.

Above all, the universal system of FPS should be continued as it has control over the market prices of essential commodities.

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