

From Policy to Plate: An Empirical Assessment of the Right to Food in Nagaon District of Assam

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Abstract

According to Article 21 of the Constitution of India, the Right to Food should not be seen as merely a welfare measure but it should be taken as one of the fundamental human rights. The Right has been strengthened by various Supreme Court judgements and implementing the National Food Security Act 2013 with the expectation that the Act will bring positive changes in society and people will not be deprived of food grains. No doubt, the Act has positive impact and reduced hunger level in society, yet the implementation at ground level has been remain a challenge. To assess its impact, the researcher examines the status of the Right to Food in India with special reference to Nagaon, Assam regarding quality and quantity of food grains distributed in the district. For the present study, the researcher divides the research location into municipal as well as rural areas of the district and collected data from 428 respondents from villages or rural areas of the district (390 beneficiaries and 38 government officials). The researcher also collected data from 171 respondents from municipal areas (135 beneficiaries and 36 government officials). Since Section 3 of the NFSA2013 promises to provide a fixed entitlement; 5 kg per person per month for priority households and 35 kg per family per month for AAY ration card holders. The Act also advocates the distribution of quality food grains as Section 24 of the Act ensures that the food grains should be fit for human consumption and conform Food safety and Standard as per FSSAI, which is checked at FCI godowns before dispatch. This paper is intended to assess the quality and quantity of the food grains distributed to the beneficiaries in the district and want to see whether the Act has been properly implemented at ground level or not despite a strong legal framework.

Keywords: Right to Food, Food Security, PDS, NFSA 2013, Human Rights, Nagaon District, Assam Nagaon District, Assam

1.1.Introduction

For human beings, food is a basic need for their lives and survival and access to adequate food is closely integrated to human dignity, health and their social well beings. If we go through the history, we find that providing food to human beings has been associated with the term charity but with the help of constitutional interpretation, judicial intervention and different legislative measures, it gradually became the matter of entitlement rather than charity. If we go through the Constitution of India, we do not find the Right to Food mentioned separately but Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, and has been also interpreted to include the right to live with and access to basic necessities. The Article has been further strengthened by Article 39(b) and 47 by their commitment towards equitable distribution of resources, nutritional improvement, and public health. The Supreme Court's intervention in People's Union

for Civil Liberties v. Union of India (2001) played a significant role in bringing food security within the domain of constitutional rights. The Court's decision has been supportive to the implementation of food and nutritional welfare schemes. Such decision taken by the Court reinforced the responsibilities of central and state government to address the issues of hunger and deprivation. Murthy (n.d.) observes that the judicial interpretation of Article 21 has expanded the meaning of the right to life by incorporating conditions necessary for a dignified existence of human entities, including the Right to food.

For the further advancement, the enactment of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA-2013) has been remarkable and significant transition in India's approach to food security for the people in which they are entitled to get food grains on fixed and minimum price. The Act does not only ensure to provide only food grains but also seeks to ensure access to adequate quantities of quality food grains at affordable prices. The Act, under Section 3, priority households are entitled to get five kilograms of food grains per person per month, Antyodaya Anna Yojana Card holders are entitled to get 35 kilograms of food grains per households per months but it has been seen and observed that the existence of statutory provisions does not guarantee for their effective implementation at grassroot level as its actual realisation is dependent upon the regularity of distribution of food grains, its proper quantity, quality, and accountability of the agencies responsible for distribution. The present study, in the context, examines the implementation of the Right to Food in Nagaon district of Assam by assessing the quality and quantity of food grains distributed through the Public Distribution System (Hereafter, PDS).

The research also compares quality and quantity of food grains provided through PDS in rural and municipal areas both incorporating the perspectives of beneficiaries and government officials so that the study may understand the extent to which legal entitlements has been implemented under the NFSA-2013.

1.2. Review of Literature

The section of literature review incorporates constitutional interpretation, entitlement-based approaches to food security, and the functioning of public welfare schemes regarding the Right to Food in India. According to Amartya Sen (1981) in his entitlement approach, it's clearly explained that availability of food does not ensure obliteration of hunger. It may occur even when food is available, when an individual does not have resources to buy or purchase it. The study is significant in Indian context as in the country food security does not depend only on agricultural production of food grains but also on purchasing capacity, public distribution mechanism and state intervention. Dreze and Sen (2013) have also emphasised the importance of public provisioning and social welfare programmes in addressing deprivation and improving human development. Their work clearly suggests that policies declaration regarding food security cannot work but it should have impact on people's actual living conditions. The perspectives provided here function as a conceptual foundation for examining whether entitlements declared by the State are rendered into meaningful access to food among vulnerable section of society or not.

Many studies on PDS have also examined the relationship between food security policies and their actual implementation. Khera (2011), in her study of the PDS in Rajasthan, found that several households purchased food grains from the open market despite having subsidised entitlements. The study pointed out some constraints from supply side and difficulties in accessing the full entitlements at Fair Price Shops (Hereafter, FPS). The study therefore reveals that existence of PDS in the state does not ensure beneficiaries to receive his/her full entitlements. In another study, Khera (2015) examines reforms in the PDS across five Indian states and observes that household purchase capacity can be increased and

beneficiaries can be motivated to get their entitlements from FPS by improving inclusiveness, affordability, and administrative mechanism. These findings of the study indicate that the success of food security programmes does not depend upon only policy design but also the coordination of affordability, accessibility, and administrative efficiency.

Existing literature also reveals that NFSA, 2013 has strengthened food security in India but the welfare scheme is facing multiple operational challenges. Drèze, Gupta, Khera, and Pimenta (2019), in this context, examine the functioning of the PDS in six economically disadvantaged states, and find improvements in coverage, targeting, and administrative reforms following the introduction of the NFSA. However, they also observe that NFSA, 2013 is not able to achieve its broader goals of eradicating food insecurity. In a similar vein, McKay et al. (2019) review on PDS and food security schemes and highlight the contribution of the system to reducing hunger and enhancing food access to vulnerable section of society but they also point out multiple issues such as corruption, diversion, targeting problems, and operational inefficiencies that reduce the real potential of the scheme. Although these studies provide valuable insights about NFSA, 2013 and PDS functioning for India's food security framework, there is always scope for district-level research examining the actual quality and quantity of food grains received by beneficiaries. The present study aims to address this gap by assessing the implementation of NFSA, 2013 in Nagaon district of Assam through a comparison between rural and municipal areas, and by incorporating the experiences of beneficiaries and the perspectives of government officials.

1.3. Research Gap

Literature review as discussed above reveals that several studies have been conducted on NFSA, 2013 and PDS as well as their implementation in India but limited attention has been given at district level in the delivery of food grains entitlements specially in Assam. Most of the researches have focused on policies, administrative reforms, and challenges in distribution system such as exclusion, irregularities in distribution of food grains, accessibility but their focus have not been placed towards the beneficiaries' perception regarding the different aspects of NFSA, 2013 and PDS. Furthermore, how the same system works differently in rural and municipal areas have also been unexplored and untouched. Together with, it's need of the time to access the perspectives of government officials and beneficiaries both to understand the gap between statutory provisions and their practical implementation. The present study is an attempt to address these limitations by examining the realisation of food grain entitlements under the NFSA, 2013, in Nagaon district of Assam, with particular reference to the quality and quantity of food grains distributed in rural and municipal areas.

1.4. Objectives of the Present Study

The present research is intended to encompass on the three objectives mentioned as follows.

1. To examine the implementation of the Right to Food under the National Food Security Act, 2013, in Nagaon district, Assam.
2. To assess the quality and quantity of food grains distributed through the Public Distribution System to beneficiaries in rural and municipal areas.
3. To compare beneficiaries' experiences and government officials' perspectives regarding the quality and quantity of the entitlements provided to beneficiaries under NFSA, 2013.

1.5. Research Design

Since the research examines the quality and quantity of food grains distributed through PDS among beneficiaries in Nagaon District, Assam, the researcher adopts a descriptive and comparative research design for the mentioned study. Actually, the study has its focus on the experiences and opinions given by beneficiaries regarding the food grains they receive under the NFSA, 2013. Since the research is intended to see how well PDS is functional in rural as well as municipal or urban areas, the researcher has divided the research areas into rural as well as municipal areas and data were collected from beneficiaries and government officials involved to PDS from both areas; rural and municipal so that the research may assess the differences between beneficiaries and government officials regarding the quantity and quality of food grains distributed through PDS.

1.6. Research Tools

To collect data from beneficiaries and government officials, the researcher uses two questionnaires titled 'Questionnaire to Beneficiaries' and 'Questionnaire to Government Officials' as main research tool. The researcher, in the questionnaire, include qualitative and quantitative questions and therefore the questionnaires are semi structured in nature. The questions taken in the questionnaire have focus on the quantity and quality of food grains, and their overall opinion regarding food grains distributed at FPS. Since the data were supposed to be collected from rural and municipal areas, the questionnaires were also administered in both rural and municipal areas of Nagaon District.

1.7. Sampling Techniques & Sample Size

For the present study, the researcher has used a multistage sampling technique for the selection of respondents from villages and municipal areas of Nagaon District, Assam. The researcher, for the present study, collected data from 39 villages (Jiajuri Gaon (village), Kamar Gaon, Matia Pahar, Parakhowa (village), Era Kapili, Kachari Gaon, Bherbheri Gaon, Sala Pathar, Salaguri Gaon, Gerokoni Village, Gayan Gaon, Goroimari pather, Ouguri village, Naltali, Sonarigaon etc.) and four municipal areas Nagaon Municipal Board, Raha Municipal Board, Kampur Municipal Board, and Dhing Municipal Board in the district. The researcher collected 599 data from villages and municipal areas taken for the research study. 87.65% (525 out of 599) of them are beneficiaries and 12.35% (74 out of 599) of the respondents are government officials associated with PDS in the district.

1.8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected with the help of questionnaires from the above-mentioned villages and municipal areas were systematically organised, classified and analysed with the help of SPSS according to the objectives of the present study. In the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, the researcher has used some symbols and abbreviations RGR (Respondent Government Officials Rural Areas), RGU (Respondent Government Officials Urban Areas), RV (Beneficiaries respondents from Villages), RU (Beneficiaries Respondents from Urban Areas). For quality and quantity of food grains, the researcher has taken three questions based on five-point scales. The questions are supposed to capture the perception of both villagers as well as government officials regarding quantity, quality of the grain they get through PDS and their satisfaction level to the quality and quantity of the food grain. Since the researcher wants to compare their opinions, an independent sample t-test has been conducted so that the researcher may compare them

statistically with the help of calculated t-value, mean value, p-value, frequencies and percentage. The analysis and interpretation of the three questions have been displayed as follows.

Do you receive your entitled quantity of food grains every month?

Do you receive your entitled quantity of food grains every month?				
Mean Value		t-value	df	P-value
RGR/RGU	RV/RU			
4.1316	1.9769	15.443	426	.000
4.5833	2.5185	10.424	169	.000

Table-1.00.

Through the question “Do you receive your entitled quantity of food grains every month?”, the researcher has made attempt to know whether villagers receive the entitled quantity of food gains every month or not. To compare their opinions, the researcher has conducted an independent sample t-test with the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between government officials and villagers with regard to the question or quantity of food but the calculated values indicates that respondents from FCI and PDS system have been graded higher than that of beneficiaries in the villages as mean values for both groups are 4.1316 and 1.9769 respectively. The t-value ($t=15.443$, $p=.000$) calculated with the help of independent sample t-test is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence for 426 degree of freedom. The researcher, therefore, rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the two groups of respondents regarding the statement and accepts the alternative one i.e. they differ significantly in their opinions. Analysis of the responses given by the government officials reflects that villagers or beneficiaries receive their entitled quantity of food grains every month but it is discarded by the response given by beneficiaries. The researcher has also conducted an independent sample t-test to analyze the data collected from urban area and found that the calculated mean values for government officials and beneficiaries are 4.5833 and 2.5185 respectively i.e. government officials have been graded higher than that of beneficiaries. The t-value ($t=10.424$, $p=.000$) reveals that there is significant difference between them regarding the aspect as calculated t-value is higher than that of critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence. Though beneficiaries in municipal area gained mean value better than villagers but still a large number of them negatively to the question. The difference in their opinion can also be seen in the form of cross-tabulation and bar graphs mentioned in **Table-1.01-1.02. & Figure-1.00-1.01.**

Villages/Rural Areas			Do you receive your entitled quantity of food grains every month?					Total
			Very rarely	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Very Often	
Respondents: RG vs RV	RG		0	3	5	14	16	38
			0.0%	7.9%	13.2%	36.8%	42.1%	100.0%
	RV		120	171	87	12	0	390
			30.8%	43.8%	22.3%	3.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Total			120	174	92	26	16	428
			28.0%	40.7%	21.5%	6.1%	3.7%	100.0%

Table-1.01.

Municipal Areas			Do you receive your entitled quantity of food grains every month?					Total
			Very rarely	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Very Often	
Respondents: RG vs RU	RG	Count	0	1	1	10	24	36
			.0%	2.8%	2.8%	27.8%	66.7%	100.0%
	RU	Count	26	51	25	28	5	135
			19.3%	37.8%	18.5%	20.7%	3.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	26	52	26	38	29	171
			15.2%	30.4%	15.2%	22.2%	17.0%	100.0%

Table-1.02.

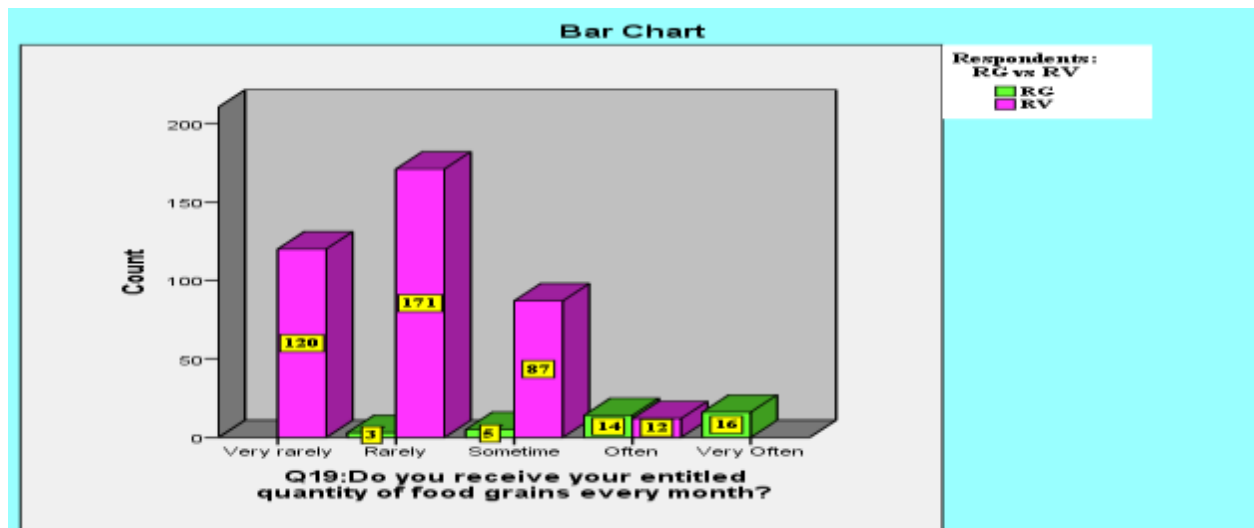


Figure-1.00.

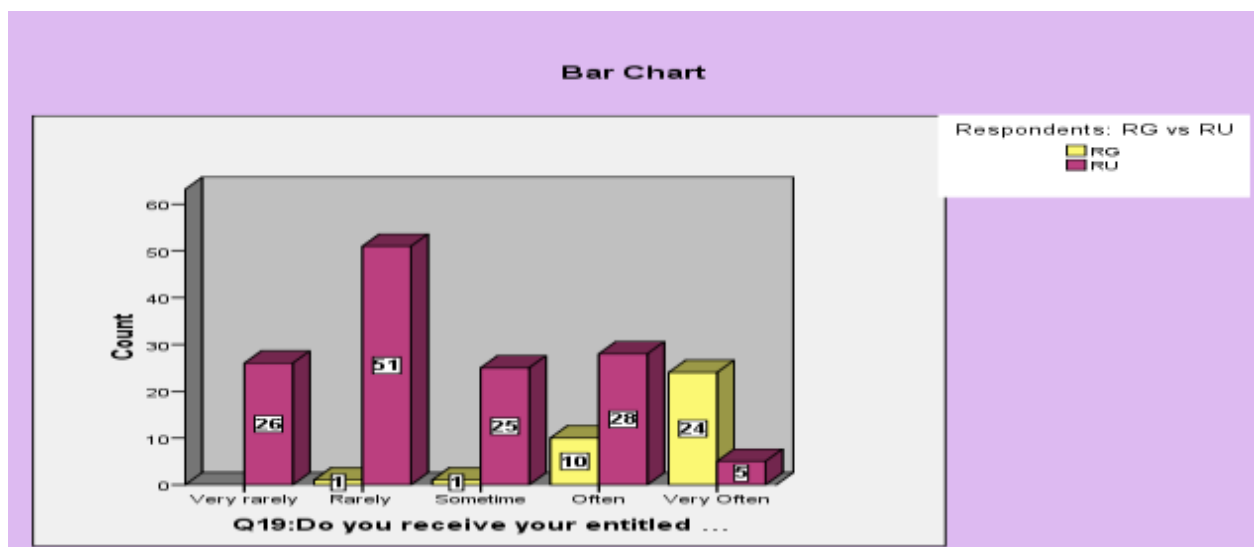


Figure-1.01.

The percent values of the data as mentioned in **Table-1.01-1.02.** and **Figure-1.00-1.01.** reveal that 7.90% (3 out of 38) of the respondents from government officials responded as either very rarely or rarely, 13.20% (5 out of 38) of them responded as sometimes, and 78.90% (30 out of 38) of them responded as either often or very often. Majority of the government employees claim that beneficiaries get their entitlement every month but the response given by villagers contradicts it. 74.60% (291 out of 390) of the villagers or beneficiaries answered as either very rarely or rarely, 22.30% (87 out of 390) of them responded as sometimes, while only 3.10% (12 out of 390) of them responded as often. None of the member from the group responded as very often. The percent analysis of the data shows that villagers in the area are not getting entitled quantity of food grains every month. For the beneficiaries in urban, the percent analysis seem to be more positive than villagers as 57.10% (77 out of 135) of the beneficiaries responded as very rarely or rarely, 18.50% (25 out of 135) of them as sometimes and 24.40% (33 out of 135) of them responded as either often or very often. In villages the percent is 3.10% which is far below than urban area.

The researcher has also collected qualitative responses from both government officials as well as villagers. Most of the government officials avoided the section as they did response of it but some of them answered. The responses given by them are as *Highly subsidized, quality food grains are provided to vulnerable groups, including the elderly, windows and low-income daily wage earners, There are some reports showing the quality of food grains delivered is suspected, with issues arising from storage in unsuitable, There is issues of inconsistent quality of food grains in some areas, Now improvements have been made, Don't received same quality of food grains in every month.* Their responses show that some of the government officials who generally responded the qualitative section agree that there are irregularities in some area but it's getting improved.

If we go through the responses given by beneficiaries, we find that the beneficiaries reputedly responded as *Most of the time receive less quantity, Quantity of the food grains never same, Never get entitled quantity, Don't get entitled amount because of under-weighing by FPS, FPS claim the stock has not arrived, only to sell it at higher prices in the open market, In some month FPS deny the food grains by showing technical glitches.* The responses given by the beneficiaries clearly highlight serious issues in distribution process in PDS. Many of the respondents stated that they receive less amount of food grain most of the time as “*Most of the time receive less quantity*” and “*Quantity of the food grains never same*”. Such response shows that the system facing lack of monitoring. Some of them reported that they “*Never get entitled quantity*” which point out that they are denied for their rights and the issue of malpractice becomes more clear and evident when beneficiaries mention that they “*don't get entitled amount because of under-weighing by FPS.*” Other responses such as “*FPS claim the stock has not arrived, only to sell it at higher prices in the open market,*” “*in some month FPS deny the food grains by showing technical glitches,*” reflect dipper level of corruption and mismanagement because it has been frequent evidence that Fair Price Shop dealers sell food grains in open market illegally as well as the government has tried to digitalized PDS for making it more comfortable and smooth but FPS dealers using it as excuse to withhold distribution.

Through the question, the researcher wanted to examine the effectiveness and reliability of Public Distribution System (PDS) in ensuring food security for beneficiaries but the negative responses given by beneficiaries reflects there are persistent structural and administrative shortcomings in PDS. There may be many reasons behind it. Many a times, Fair Price Shop Dealers supply insufficient food grains and lack of proper monitoring and weak accountability mechanisms generally allow such malpractices to continue

unchecked. Many of the villagers do not know about their exact entitlements and the lack of awareness lead to the silent acceptance of reduced quantities of food grains.

The food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are good enough in quality.				
Mean Value		t-value	df	P-value
RGR/RGU	RV/RU			
4.1579	3.5231	4.363	426	.000
4.1111	3.2963	4.678	169	.000

Table-1.03.

The statement “The food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are good enough in quality” has been taken in the present study to assess the quality of food grains provided to beneficiaries. Analysis of the data collected for the statement indicates that the government officials have been graded higher than that of villagers as the mean value calculated for the government officials is 4.1579 and the corresponding figure for villagers is 3.5231. The t-value ($t=4.1579$, $p=.000$) calculated with the help of independent sample t-test is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence for 426 degree of freedom. The result therefore shows that there is no significant difference between the opinions of the two groups of respondents: the government officials and the villagers. If we examine the mean values for both groups we find that regarding quality of food is good as majority of the people from both groups accept that the quality of food grains is good. Even beneficiaries, most of them, accept that quality of food grains is good in quality. Only some of them, maybe it is area specific, disagree the statement and they do not get quality food grains. For the beneficiaries in urban area contradiction can be seen between their opinions as mean value calculated for government officials and beneficiaries are 4.1111 and 3.2963 respectively i.e. government officials have been graded higher than that of beneficiaries. Many of the beneficiaries in urban area disagree the statement and responded that the food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are not good enough in quality. The t-value ($t=4.678$, $p=.000$) is far greater than that of critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence (See Appendix-III). The differences in their opinion have been also arranged in the form of cross-tabulation and bar graphs mentioned in **Table-1.04-1.05. & Figure-1.02-1.03.**

Villages/Rural Areas			The food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are good enough in quality.					Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	
Respondents: RG vs RV	RG		0	2	0	26	10	38
			0.0%	5.3%	0.0%	68.4%	26.3%	100.0%
	RV		9	72	15	294	0	390
			2.3%	18.5%	3.8%	75.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Total			9	74	15	320	10	428
			2.1%	17.3%	3.5%	74.8%	2.3%	100.0%

Table-1.04.

Municipal Areas			The food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are good enough in quality.					Total
			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree	
Respondents: RG vs RU	RG		0	2	1	24	9	36
			.0%	5.6%	2.8%	66.7%	25.0%	100.0%
	RU		3	39	10	81	2	135
			2.2%	28.9%	7.4%	60.0%	1.5%	100.0%
Total			3	41	11	105	11	171
			1.8%	24.0%	6.4%	61.4%	6.4%	100.0%

Table-1.05.

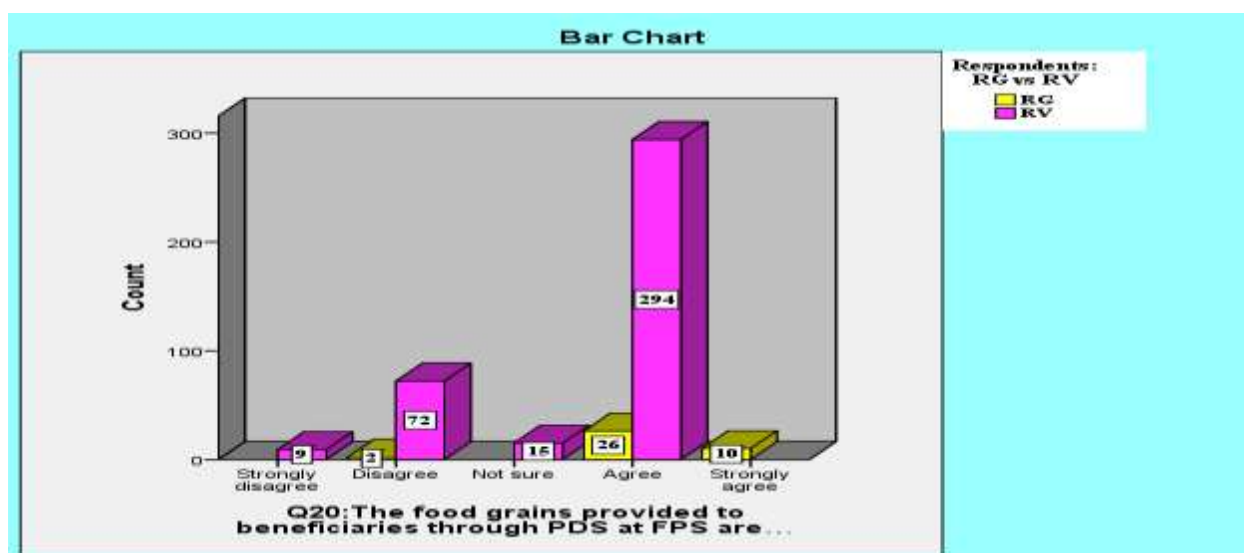


Figure-1.02.

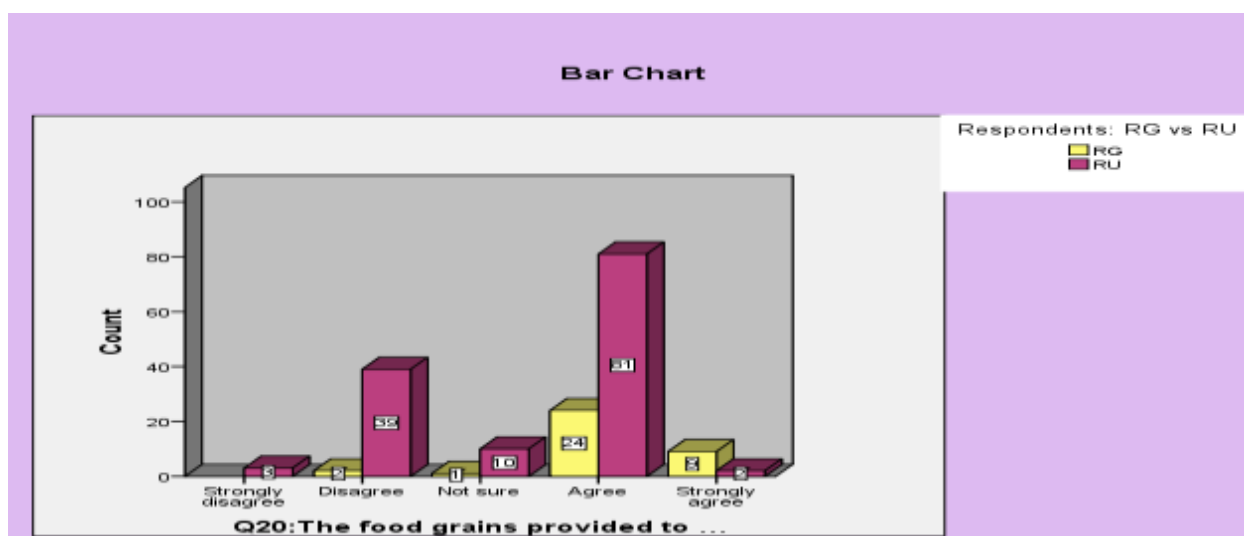


Figure-1.03.

The percent analysis given in **Table-1,04-1.05** and **Figure-1.02-1.03** reveals that 5.30% (2 out of 38) of the respondent from FCI and PDS employee responded as either strongly disagree or disagree, 94.70% (36 out of 38) of them responded as either strongly agree or agree. None of the respondents responded as not sure i.e. most of the government officials claim that government supply quality food grains and the beneficiaries are provided the same. If we examine the data given by beneficiaries, we find that 20.80% (81 out of 390) of the beneficiaries responded as either strongly disagree or disagree, 3.80% (15 out of 390) of them responded as not sure, and 75.40% (294 out of 390) of them responded as agree. None of them chose as strongly agree. For the urban area, government officials seem to be very positive as 5.60% (2 out of 36) of them responded as disagree, 2.80% (1 out of 36) of them as not sure and 91.70% (33 out of 36) of them as either agree or highly agree i.e. majority of the respondents from government officials give their opinion that the food grains provided to beneficiaries in their area are good enough in quality but many of the beneficiaries in urban area contradict the opinion as 31.10% (42 out of 135) of them disagree that they are provided quality food, 7.40% (10 out of 135) of them responded as not sure and 61.50% (83 out of 135) of them agree that they are provided quality food at FPS. If we analyze the percent value of the beneficiaries, we find that people in urban area seem to be more negative regarding the quality of food grains. For the beneficiaries in rural area, they have fewer alternative sources for purchasing food grains and therefore they tend to compare food grains provided through PDS with their limited market options, while beneficiaries in urban area have easier access to private retail markets and wider variety of food grains which make them to evaluate food grains provided through PDS more critically than villagers. The statement “The food grains provided to beneficiaries through PDS at FPS are good enough in quality” is highly significant for the present study as it intended to evaluate not just availability of food grains but also the standard of food provided to beneficiaries. By evaluating the quality of food grains, it can be determined whether food is safe, edible and nutritionally adequate for consumption or not. The study can also assess whether the PDS is fulfilling its objective by ensuring not only access to food but also maintaining acceptable standards of quality, which is essential for the overall well-being of beneficiaries. By analyzing responses, the researcher reaches to the conclusion that beneficiaries are being provided quality food grains as most of the beneficiaries also accept that they are provided quality food grains. No doubt, some of the respondents seem to be complaining and responded that they are not provided quality food grains. We can try to find its answer by analyzing qualitative data given by the beneficiaries. The response such as “*Sometimes receive low quality food grains having fungus,*” “*Quality is never same,*” “*Compromised quality,*” “*Due to poor storage conditions, we get damaged, rotented food grains*”, indicate serious concern regarding quality of food grains distributed under PDS. In the responses, it is quite clear that some of the FPS facing problem of poor storage condition, which affect the safety and edibility of the food grains. The response “*Quality is never same*” reveals inconsistency in the distribution and FPS in some of the villages are not maintaining standard of food grains at regular basis. Together with such responses reflect systematic issues such as negligence in storage infrastructure, lack of quality check, and poor monitoring mechanism. The government therefore must take it into consideration so that it may check such practices and ensure safe and nutritious food to the beneficiaries.

How would you rate the quality of the food grains provided through the PDS?

How would you rate the quality of the food grains provided through the PDS?				
Mean Value		t-value	df	P-value
RGR/RGU	RV/RU			

4.0263	3.1538	8.182	426	.000
4.2222	3.2222	7.090	169	.000

Table-1.06.

The question “How would you rate the quality of the food grains provided through the PDS?”, taken for the present study is intended to know satisfaction level of beneficiaries because quality and quantity of food grains must be good and nutritious, and can be evaluated on the basis of how much beneficiaries are satisfied. Additionally assessing satisfaction level of beneficiaries, the research can identify issues such as food grains of poor quality, irregularities in distribution, poor storage, adulteration etc. the question is not only part of “Questionnaire to Beneficiaries” but also it is the part of “Questionnaire to Government Official” so that the researcher may get insights of both groups of respondents for service delivery standards and the broader impact of PDS on welfare of marginalized or vulnerable communities. For understanding their opinions, the researcher performed an independent sample t-test and found that respondents from government official have been graded higher than that of beneficiaries as the calculated mean values for both groups are 4.0263 and 3.1538 respectively. The t-value ($t=8.182$, $p=.000$) calculated with the help of independent sample t-test is higher than the critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence for 426 degree of freedom. The result therefore shows that there is significant difference between the opinions of the two groups of respondents: the government officials and the villagers. The null hypothesis therefore can be rejected and alternative one can be accepted. The mean values calculated for both groups are more than average value of 3.000 which means a large population from the respondents are satisfied and rate the quality of food either good or very good. Though value for beneficiaries is less than government officials and shows differences in their opinions i.e. beneficiaries does not rate the quality of food grains as the government officials claim. The researcher has also conducted an independent sample t-test to analyze the data collected from urban area and found that the calculated mean values for government officials and beneficiaries are 4.2222 and 3.2222 respectively i.e. government officials have been graded higher than that of beneficiaries. The t-value ($t=7.090$, $p=.000$) reveals that there is significant difference between them regarding the aspect as calculated t-value is higher than that of critical value of 1.96 at 95% level of confidence. The differences in their opinion have been also arranged in the form of cross-tabulation and bar graphs mentioned in **Table-1.07-1.08 & Figure-1.04-1.05**.

Villages/Rural Areas			Q21: How would you rate the quality of the food grains provided through the PDS?					Total
			Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very good	
Respondents: RG vs RV	RG		0	1	4	26	7	38
			0.0%	2.6%	10.6%	68.4%	18.4%	100.0%
	RV		3	42	237	108	0	390
			0.8%	10.8%	60.7%	27.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Total			3	43	241	134	7	428
			0.7%	10.0%	56.3%	31.3%	1.6%	100.0%

Table-1.07.

Municipal Areas				Q21: How would you rate the quality of the food grains provided through the PDS?				Total
				Poor	Average	Good	Very good	
Respondents: RG vs RU	RG		1	2	21	12	36	
			2.8%	5.6%	58.3%	33.3%	100.0%	
	RU		26	55	52	2	135	
			19.3%	40.7%	38.5%	1.5%	100.0%	
Total			27	57	73	14	171	
			15.8%	33.3%	42.7%	8.2%	100.0%	

Table-1.08.

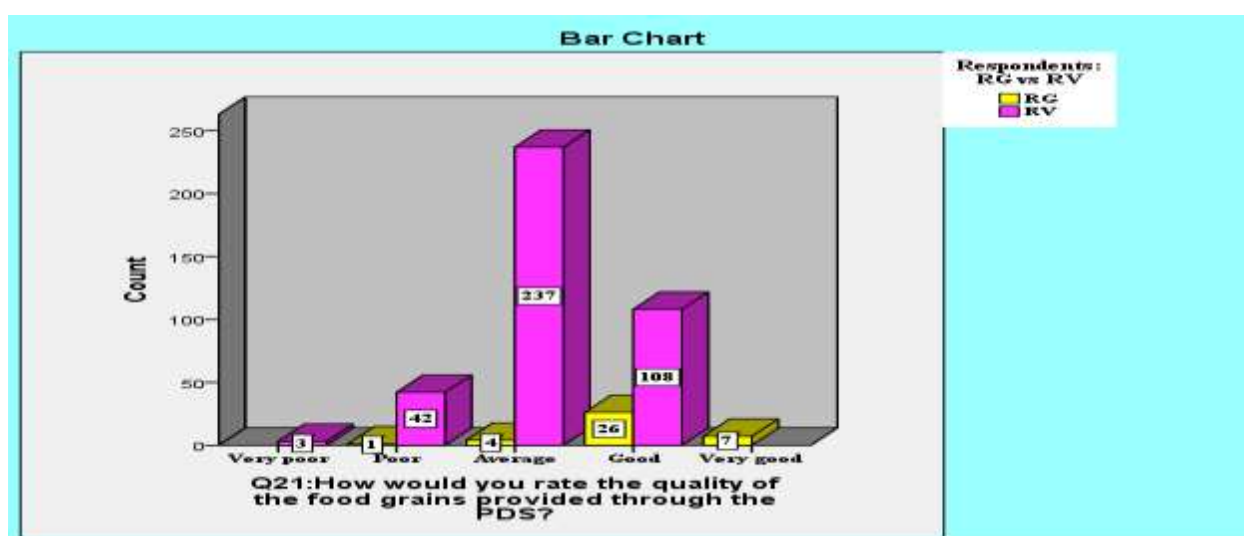


Figure-1.04.

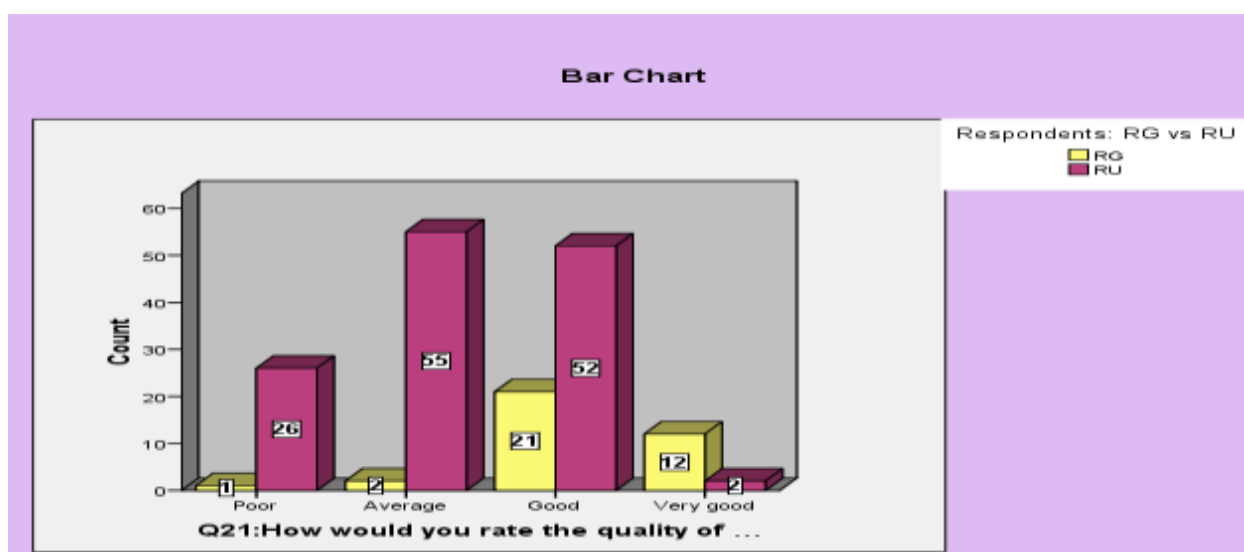


Figure-1.05.

The percent analysis given in **Table-1.07-1.08** and **Figure-1.04-1.05** reveals that 2.60% (1 out of 38) of the respondent from FCI and PDS employee responded as either very poor or poor, 10.60% (4 out of 38) of them responded as average, and 86.80% (33 out of 38) of them responded as either good or very good. The corresponding figures for beneficiaries are 11.60% (45 out of 390), 60.70% (237 out of 390), and 27.70% (108 out of 390) i.e. 11.60% of the beneficiaries rated the quality of food grains as either very poor or poor, 60.70% of them as average while only 27.70% of them rated it as good. None of the respondents from the group rated food grains as very good. The percent analysis of the data makes it crystal clear that their opinion is different from government officials. Majority of the government officials rated it as either good or very good but it is not with beneficiaries. Only 27.70% of them rated it as good. The responses given by beneficiaries seem to be moderate but unsatisfactory also as 60.70% of them rated the food grain quality as average which shows the level of their acceptance rather than satisfaction. It points out the lack of reliability in the quality of grains distributed under PDS. 27.70% of rating the quality of food grains as good reveals that some of the beneficiaries are getting standard food grains, while 11.60% of rating as either very poor or poor shows the beneficiaries are getting damaged or food grains of substandard. If we access the responses given by the beneficiaries in urban area, we find the same as 19.30% (26 out of 135) of them graded the food grain as poor in quality, 40.70% (55 out of 135) of them as average and 40% (54 out of 135) of the beneficiaries graded good. Even in urban area more than 60% of the beneficiaries do not seem to be satisfied with the quality of food grains. On the basis of the analysis of the data, the researcher may conclude that system is functional and providing food grains to the needy but is not able to maintain the quality of food grains. The government and authorities making it functional must go through it and see where the system is lacking in providing quality food grains to the vulnerable section of society.

1.9. Conclusion

Through these questions, the researcher aims to know the opinions of beneficiaries and government officials associated with PDS in villages and municipal areas of the district. The analysis of the data reveals that 74.60% (291 out of 390) of the beneficiaries in villages and 57.10% (77 out of 135) of the beneficiaries in municipal areas of the district responded that they rarely receive their entitlements at FPS. Regarding quality of the food grains, 20.80% (81 out of 390) of the beneficiaries in rural areas responded either rarely or very rarely while the figure is 31.10% (42 out of 135) in municipal area. No doubt, for the quality of food grains majority of the beneficiaries in either urban or rural agree that they are provided quality food grains but 20.80% of the beneficiaries in rural and 31.10% in urban areas disagree the statement. The result therefore reveals the existence of corruption and malpractices in PDS either in villages or urban areas in the district. When they are asked how they rate the quality of food grains, 11.60% of villagers rated it either poor or very poor, and 60.70% of them rated it average, while the figures for municipal areas are 19.30% and 40.70%. The analysis of the data therefore reveals that beneficiaries either in villages or municipal areas are facing problem regarding quantity and quality of food grains. The findings of the present study expose some serious issues that must be tackle for proper functioning of PDS. The government should pay greater attention to ensure the quality and quantity of food grains provided through NFSA, 2013. In addition, there should be regular monitoring of the quantity of the food grains at FPS particularly in the areas, where beneficiaries report difficulties so that the government may check malpractices and ensure safe and nutritious food to the beneficiaries.

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