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Food expenditure pattern and utilization of various government schemes among below poverty line families living in slum of Delhi

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Abstract

The availability of the adequate food does not imply that food is evenly distributed among all the family members. This study was conducted to assess the food expenditure pattern and utilization of various government schemes related to food security like Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mid-Day Meal and Public Distribution System among Below Poverty Line (BPL) families living in a slum of Delhi. The data was collected on food expenditure pattern and utilization of various schemes from 40 BPL families living in a slum of Seemapuri using standardized procedures. The data revealed that food expenditure pattern survey aims at generating estimates of average household monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution among the households. The families were spending 41.5% of their total expenditure on the food items. The monthly per capita expenditure on milk, meat, pulses and vegetables was higher than cereal and sugar. The families were availing services of ICDS, MDM and purchasing subsidized food grains from fair price shop. Majority of the school going children (70%) were receiving Mid-day meal at school.

Keywords: Expenditure Pattern, Utilization, Food Insecurity, ICDS, MDM.

1. Introduction

Government of India passed the National Food Security Bill 2013 (NFSA), to provide subsidy for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.^[1] After Green Revolution, India has become more or less self-sufficient in cereals but not in pulses and oilseeds, demand of fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products, meat and poultry has been increasing due to change in the consumption pattern therefore there is need to increase crop diversification^[2] India along with its economic growth also need to translate it into equity amongst vulnerable group. Data from NSSO 66th round (2009-10)^[3] showed that 40 % of the total expenditure was on food items by the poor families. Data from NFHS-3 (2005-06)^[4] also indicated that children belonging to lowest wealth quintile are more undernourished.

Various programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act were initiated to increase purchasing power of families Food-based interventions such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM) were introduced by the Government of India to meet the energy needs of the vulnerable populations. In 1965, the Government of India introduced universal Public Distribution System with the aim of maintaining stability in the prices of essential commodities and keeping a check on private trade and black-marketing.^[5] While the PDS is a farmer price support and consumer subsidy program for food grains, the ICDS focuses on meal supply to pre-school children and their mothers, and the MDM targets children of school age in order to improve enrolment and attendance in government schools. Mid-Day meal is enormity of the administrative and logistical responsibilities of nutrition delivery to the children in schools.^[6] Supplementary feeding is used as magnet for proving other services under ICDS scheme.^[7] The present study was undertaken to assess the utilization of various food assistance programmes and food expenditure pattern among BPL families living in a slum of Delhi.

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2. Materials and methods

The selection of the slum was done using purposive sampling method. Seemapuri is located in the east of Delhi, where people had been living without the basic amenities of life. A list of all BPL families was obtained from the fair price shop of the area and all BPL families living in the slum of Seemapuri were identified. The present study was undertaken on a sample of 40 households. Forty BPL families were selected using systematic random sampling method for data collection. First household was selected using random sampling method and thereafter the data is collected from every fifth house until the data was available for 40 BPL families. A written consent was obtained from the head of the household before data collection. Data collection was initiated after obtaining ethical clearance.

The data were collected on general profile of the family, monthly food expenditure pattern and utilization of various government schemes like ICDS, MDM and PDS through structured questionnaire from primary caregiver (mother/father/grandmother) of the household.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were organized and analyzed statistically. All data were consolidated and systematically coded in Microsoft excel 2007. Frequencies and percentages of each parameter of food expenditure pattern and utilization of various government schemes were calculated.

3. Results and Discussion

The present study was conducted on forty families having the BPL card residing in urban slum. The mean size of the family was 4.0 ± 0.99 and all the families were nuclear. Most of the families had one child in the family, 32.5% had three children and 17.5% had two children. Out of 40 families, 21 were Muslims and 19 were Hindus. Ninety percent of the families belonged to schedule caste while 7.5% belonged to other backward class. It was observed from the present study that nearly 41.5% of the expenditure of the total income was spent on food items. Maximum (10.32%) expenditure were done on milk and milk products by the BPL families. Milk which provides good quality of protein, Vitamin A, other B-complex vitamins, calcium should be included in the daily diet, particularly for infants, children and women. Despite of high price of milk all families tried to give some amount of milk to their children daily. Figure 1 showed that nearly 10 percent of the total expenditure was done on milk and another ten percent on the non-vegetarian food items (meat, fish, egg) per month. Both of these food items are the high value foods with respect to nutrition. It was found that only 5.4 % of monthly per capita expenditure was done on pulses Monthly per capita expenditure on vegetables and fruits was 5.9% and 1.98% respectively. Mainly vegetables and fruits had shown price inflation but all families reported that they tried to include these items in their diets as much as they could. The minimum monthly per capita expenditure was done on cereals (2.13%) and sugar (1.98%), as these families were buying a good share of wheat, rice and sugar from Fair Price Shop at the subsidized rates after NFSA, 2013.

Findings from the present study when compared with NSSO 66th round data (Figure 1) indicated that though the share of expenditure on food hasn't declined after the implementation of NFSA (2013) but the expenditure on cereals by BPL families had reduced remarkably, which had increased their purchasing capacity to buy more value added food items like milk, meat and pulses. This showed the positive effect of the National Food Security Act, 2013 on improving the nutritional status of low-income families.

Table 1: Average Monthly per capita expenditure (in rupees) on various food items by families (n=40)

Food items	Mean \pm SD (in rupees)
Cereals	39.1 \pm 22.39
Pulses	99.3 \pm 50.48
Milk & milk products	186.3 \pm 94.12
Vegetables	104.7 \pm 35.93
Fruits	36.3 \pm 27.53
Sugar	25.5 \pm 14.15
Oil	75.4 \pm 21.76
Meat/Fish/Poultry	186.4 \pm 99.36
Total food expenditure	714.23 \pm 324.23

A study was conducted on 250 households in North India; it was found that the mean total monthly income spent on food by food-secure households was higher than money spent by food- insecure households (Chinnakali *et al*, 2014).^[8] The study also revealed that half of the household expenditure was on food. Maximum expenditure was done on cereals, vegetables and milk followed by meat, sugar and pulses.

A study done by Pradhan MR, *et al*, 2013^[9] on urban low and middle income families living in Delhi had shown that fifty percent of the households spent at least two-third of the income on food. The major (22%) expenditure were on vegetables, 16% of the total food expenditure on milk and milk products and cereals and related products (15%).

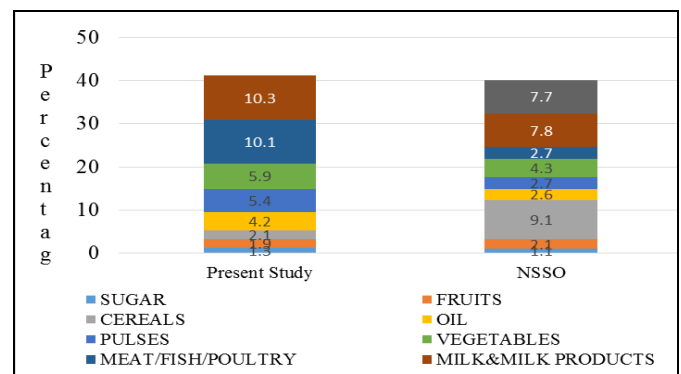


Fig. 1: Percent Monthly Expenditure on food items

NSSO data showed that cereals contributed the highest share i.e. 9.1% of the total expenditure. Milk and milk products contributed 7.8% of the total expenditure and vegetables share 4.3% of the total. Pulses and non-vegetarian food both contributed the 2.7% share of the total expenditure. Fruits and oils contributed 2.1% and 2.6% respectively. Sugar contributed the least share of the total food expenditure i.e. 1.1% (Figure 1).

Majority of the families (87.5%) reported that AWC opened regularly in their area. About 80% of the children were immunized by the ANM. None of the families were aware about the provision of preschool education at AWC. Two-third of 7 months to 3 years of the children and 86.6 % of 3-6 year old children were receiving supplementary food at least 2-3 times a week (Figure 2). Majority of 7-12 months (70%) and 1-3 years (55%) were able to eat only half of the given amount. Majority of the school going children (70%) were receiving Mid-day meal at school (Figure 3). Mothers (80%) also revealed that they did not pack school tiffin for their wards as quantity and quality of food given under MDM is acceptable. All but one BPL families were purchasing wheat, rice and sugar from fair price shop under Targetted Public Distribution System. Poor quality of the rice was the major problem faced by the beneficiaries.

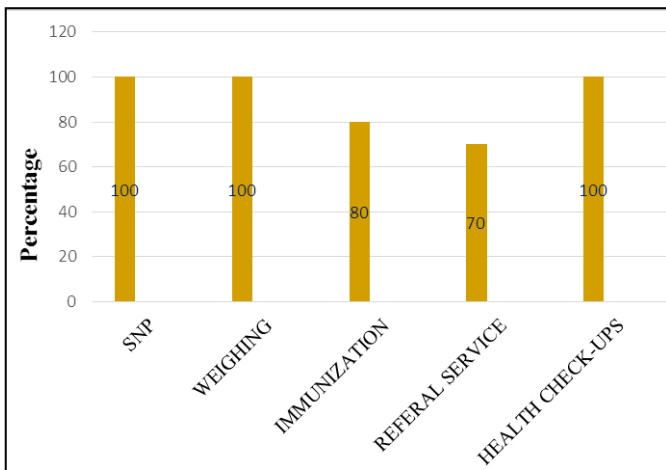


Fig 2: Utilization of ICDS Services

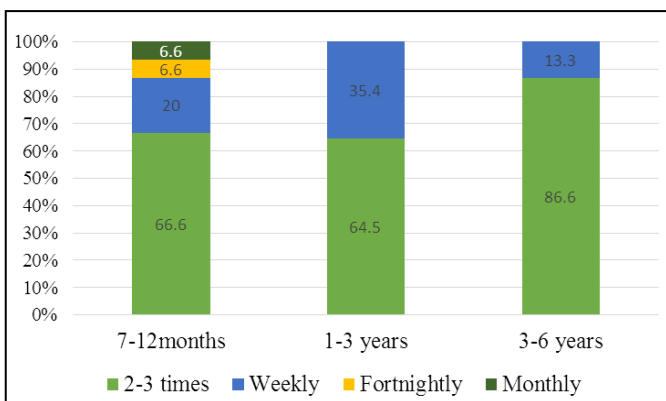


Fig 3: Supplementary Nutrition Programme

In September 2013, Parliament enacted the National Food Security Act, 2013, under this act, TPDS provides the right to food as legal entitlements to the poor households to deliver the food grains in subsidized rate. For lower income group, Public Distribution System act as safety net for food related problems in the family ^[10].

4. Conclusion

The data from the present study showed that after implementation of NFSA (2013) which envisaged to provide wheat, rice and sugar at a very subsidized rate to BPL families, the expenditure of these families on cereals and sugar have declined when compared with NSSO (2009) data on food expenditure. However, total expenditure on food remained more or less same. The BPL families in the present study was spending more on value added food items like milk, meat, pulses and vegetables indicating that diets of these families had started to diversify. Nutrition and Health education programmes should be conducted within the families to generate awareness about the utilization of various government schemes and dietary diversification within the family budget.

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