CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

6.1 Introduction
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Introduction:

This study is an attempt to explain the satisfaction derived by the consumers from the fair price shops and the various problems they have to face in the fair price shops. The study begins with the origin and growth of fair price shops. The present study is helpful to understand the object of public distribution system, development of fair price shops in different periods, and the various factors which influence consumers' attitude towards fair price shops, in Tuticorin.

The researcher has used both primary and secondary data for writing this thesis. Both descriptive and analytical approach are used in this study. Interview schedule is used by the researcher for collecting primary data. The summary of findings and suggestions for improvement of services rendered by the fair price shops are presented in this chapter.

6.2 Summary of Findings:

The summary of the findings of the present study is highlighted in the following lines.
6.2.1 The second chapter deals with the origin and development of public distribution system, different policies of the Government in different periods, development of public distribution system, improvements made in the fair price shops, policies of central and state government regarding the distribution of essential commodities, through fair price shops.

6.2.2 The third chapter highlights the level of satisfaction of consumers regarding the services rendered by the fair price shops. It further explains the relationship between the satisfaction of consumers and their attitude towards fair price shops. In this analysis 20 factors have been identified for determining the level of satisfaction. After determining the level of satisfaction the researcher has identified six factors such as age of the consumers, sex of the consumers, Marital status of the consumers, Literacy level of consumers, Monthly income of the consumers and the size of the family to find out whether there is any relationship between the level of satisfaction and the above said factors.
The researcher has tested the influence of cash and every factor on satisfaction to find out whether it has a significant influence of the level of satisfaction of consumers or not. It is found with the help of Chi-square test. How far these factors influencing the satisfaction of the consumers and also the attitude of consumers towards fair price shop have been analysed.

The study reveals that among the sample consumers 76 (50.67%) consumers are in the age group of 20 to 40 years and 74 (49.33%) consumers are in the age group of above 40 years.

The study indicates that among the sample consumers 99 (66%) consumers are male consumers, and 51 (34%) consumers are female consumers.

The study also indicates that among the sample consumers 78 (52%) are married and 72 (48%) are unmarried.
The study highlights that 82 (61.33%) sample consumers have small size family and 86 (57.33%) sample consumers have big size family.

The study also highlights that among the sample consumers, 85 (56%) consumers have monthly income of below Rs.1,000; 24 (16%) consumers earn Rs.1,000 to 2,000 per month; 28 (18.67%) consumers earn Rs. 2,000 to 3,000 per month; 10 (6.67%) consumers earn Rs.3,000 to 4,000 per month and 4 (2.66%) consumers earn more than Rs.4,000 per month.

This analysis reveals that out of six factors identified by the researcher four factors namely, age of consumers, sex of the consumers, marital status of the consumers and literacy level of the consumers do not influence significantly the level of satisfaction regarding the services rendered by the fair price shops.

The two factors namely the size of the family and monthly income of the consumers have significant influence on the level of satisfaction regarding the services rendered by the fair price shops.
The Fourth Chapter explains the various problems of consumers in buying commodities from the fair price shops. They are problems in the issue of rations cards, problems when consumers are transferred from one town to another town, problems when consumers shift their home, problems of consumers regarding the shop allotment, problems of consumers regarding the business hours of fair price shops, problems of consumers regarding the supply of information from fair price shops, problems regarding the quantity of supply, problems regarding the number of visits by consumers, problems regarding the quality of products distributed by the fair price shops, problems regarding the weighing, problems regarding the waiting time, problems regarding the behaviour of salesmen in the fair price shops.

It is found that among the 150 sample consumers, 62 (42.33%) consumers feel that the services of fair price shops are moderate; 38 (24.67%) consumers are highly satisfied with the services of fair price shops. 50 (34%) consumers are dissatisfied with the services of fair price shops.
The Fifth chapter highlights the issues of public distribution system. The issues of public distribution system are grouped as, issues of Fair price shops, issues in allotment and off-take, issues in storage, issues in transportation, issues concerned with personnel management, issues related to the cost of distribution, and issues concerned with Vigilance Committee.

The study finds that the consumers are not able to obtain full benefit of Public Distribution System due to its inherent weaknesses. The issues of fair price shops may be solved by establishing Civil Supplies Corporation fair price shops in all areas. The Civil Supplies Corporation fair price shops are financially sound, adequate staff, and other necessaries. Otherwise, fair price shops administered by co-operatives shall be provided with all necessaries. The dealers of fair price shops shall be permitted to earn reasonable margin. The employees may be reasonably paid. This may reduce malpractice by dealers of fair price shops. The issue method of rationcards may be perfected. The Bogus cards incirculation swallow the major benefits of fair price
shops. The defects in the functioning of Vigilance Committee shall be rectified. The Vigilance Committee may be appointed by conducting election. Thus political interference shall be avoided.

6.3 Suggestions to solve the problems of consumers in buying their monthly quota:

6.3.1 Problems regarding the issue of rations cards:

The procedure regarding issue of ration cards are not simplified. The real problem in cards issuing is the formalities to be followed in getting ration cards. If any family is not found at the time of taking census, the family concerned find it very difficult to get the ration card. The family has to bribe Taluk officials for getting the ration card.

To solve this problem, sufficient time (say one month) may be given for the families to include themselves in the Census. For this purpose, the Statistical Department concerned may give public announcement that they could include their names in the Census in the office hours at specified days. Thus the Consumers' problem of getting new ration cards may be minimised.
6.3.2 Problems when consumers are transferred from one town to another town:

The present situation of moving with the two Taluk offices may be reduced to one. In the new town Taluk office, the old card may be surrendered, the office would make arrangement for cancelling the old card and for issuing new card.

One of the main reasons for the existence of bogus cards is non surrendering of the old cards to the Taluk office concerned. The streamlining of the issue of transfer cards will result in minimising bogus cards.

6.3.3 Problems when they shift their house from one ward to another ward:

Shifting the house within the same town also puts the consumers to trouble. The consumers have to apply for deletion certificate to Taluk office, the taluk office issues deletion certificate. Then the actual deletion is effected by the previous fair price shop in the ration card. Inclusion in the new fair price shop is effected after the issue of orders to that effect by the Taluk official.
To solve this problem the following procedure may be followed. The consumers can surrender the ration cards in the new fair price shops. The fair price shop itself will make arrangement for deletion in the previous fair price shop. This obviates the consumers moving with Taluk office and thereby makes getting the ration cards easy.

6.3.4 Consumers' Problems regarding shop allotment:

The efficiency and inefficiency of the central management of fair price shops influence the services rendered by them. Improving the efficiency of the shops is very difficult. It involves restructuring the entire system of management. The weaknesses in Civil Supplies Corporation, its distribution system, the weaknesses in the consumers' Co-operative Society, its formation, management recruitment, training of employees, remuneration to employees and the like influence the operational efficiency of the shops.

The fair price shops are the last link in the chain of public distribution system. Unless the salesmen
in the fair price shops are well paid, they cannot render service satisfactorily to public. The salesmen in the Employees' Co-operatives are moderately paid. The Salesmen in the Civil Supplies Corporation fair price shops are reasonably paid. But the Salesmen in the other Co-operatives-operated fair price shops are paid a meagre amount only.

To solve this problem, any one of the following suggestions may be considered by the Government. Either it may take over all the fair price shops throughout India, or the Government may pay 100% grant towards the salaries of sales people.

6.3.5 Problems of consumers regarding Uncertainty of Supply:

The consumers do not know when the rationed articles will be supplied by the fair price shops. This is due to the fact that the fair price shops are depending upon the supply of rationed articles from the Civil Supply Corporation. The Civil Supply Corporation in turn depends upon Food Corporation of India. Further the fair
price shops do not settle their accounts in time. As a result the fair price shops are not in a position to settle their accounts with the Civil Supply Corporation. Consequently the question of uncertainty of supply arises.

To remedy this problem, the fair price shops may take all efforts to settle their dues in time. So that the fair price shops can purchase their requirements from the Civil Supply Corporation in time.

6.3.6 Problems of consumers regarding Business Hours:

Majority of the sample consumers feel that the business hours of the fair price shops are not convenient to them. Even though the fair price shops are open by 8 o'clock, the salesmen commence the actual sales only by 10.30 A.m., under the pretext that the salesmen have gone to Civil Supplies godown for taking delivery.

The Civil Supplies Corporation Supplies goods quickly to their own fair price shops. This discriminatory attitude may be changed. With these steps, the irregular supply, and irregular business hours could be set right.
The Vigilance Committee official concerned and the Inspecting officers in their surprise visit, may check whether the fair price shops are functioning according to the time schedule. Voluntary organisation like Consumer Council may be authorised to check the functioning of fair price shops.

6.3.7 Date of Supply:

Information regarding the supply of commodities is not well displayed on the Boards of fair price shops. It has been observed that some of the fair price shops do not maintain notice boards at all. Hence all the fair price shops may be compelled to display on the notice board, the date, time and the articles to be supplied. Shops not displaying the stock on hand, the commodities which are distributed on that date, may be punished severely. For this Vigilance Committee could take effective steps to make fair price shops display the above said details on Notice Board.

6.3.8 Problems of consumers regarding the quantum of Supply:

It is found that the fair price shops do not supply essential commodities in required quantities. One
of the Government reports points out that one-third of the ration cards in circulation are bogus.

If bogus cards are eliminated from circulation, the Government can increase the quantum of supply to the bonafide cardholders.

To solve this problem, the Government may take effective measures to plug the above stated loopholes. To ensure adequate supply of essential articles to the consumers, the Government policy in fixing quota should be radically changed. The Government may consider the income of the family and the size of the family while fixing the quota. The maximum quantity to be supplied may be fixed for the consumers whose income is above Rs. 1,000 and for the consumers whose income is below Rs. 1,000 the maximum limit may not be fixed.
There are also non-users of ration cards. Because they do not need certain commodities. The Government must assess the demand conditions and draw a plan of consumption of the essential commodities. A tentative month-wise demand schedule should be taken up for future periods by calling for the estimated monthly sales from the fair price shops. Those estimates of fair price shops may be duly checked by the authorities concerned so that they can be taken as a real basis for the estimation of the demand. The aggregating of the said estimates of the fair price shop at Taluk and at the district level becomes the well built basis for the public distribution system to arrive at the potential demand for commodities. Thus the Government could procure only demanded products and distribute to the vulnerable sections the required quantity of products.

6.3.9 Problems of Consumers in paying many visits to fair price shops:

The consumers have to pay many visits to get their quota because of uncertainty of supply. This is due to the fact that the fair price shops do not get their
supply in time from the Civil Supplies Corporation. Hence the Government take effective steps to see to it that the Food Corporation of India and the Civil Supplies Corporation ensure regular supply in time. The fair price shops may also try to settle the accounts in time and take delivery from the Civil Supplies Corporation.

6.3.10 Problems of Consumers regarding the quality of products:

It is found that certain fair price shops are supplied with good quality of products by the Civil Supplies Corporation. The quality of the products supplied by the Civil Supplies Corporation varies from shop to shop. The shops have no choice in taking delivery. If the commodities supplied by the Food Corporation of India is good, the fair price shops can supply good quality of products. It has been observed that even if the Food Corporation of India supplies good quality products, they are replaced by poor quality products by the movement clerks.
To solve this problem the Government, through Central Investigation Department of Civil Supplies may take effective steps to avoid these malpractices.

6.3.11 Problems of Consumers regarding the Weighments:

Majority of the consumers opined that there is a shortage of 5% to 10% in weighment. The real problem for underweighment is, while issuing quotas at Civil Supplies Corporation, the authorities of fair price shops are not allowed to witness the weighment. An official will be there and he is to be trusted for weighment. As per the version of the employees of the fair price shops they are not receiving the articles in correct weight and measurement. Consequently, the employees of the fair price shops resort to underweighment to make good the loss.

Poor quality of packing materials, and poor storage facilities also force the fair price shops to underweigh the commodities.

To solve this problem, the fair price shops may be ensured the supply in correct measurement and weighment by the Civil Supplies Corporation. To avoid the
loss in transportation of the commodities, better quality packing materials be used. Adequate storage facilities may also be made in the fair price shops and in the godowns to avoid loss of commodities in storing. The salesmen in the fair price shops may be reasonably paid. So that they may not resort to malpractices. Since the fair price shops are left with low margin, they are not able to attract talented and trained sales people by offering reasonable compensation. Therefore, the Government may provide annual subsidy to the fair price shops towards the salaries of sales people.

To check the fair price shops, special officials from weighing and Measures Department may pay surprise visit to the fair price shops and check the weighing procedure of commodities sold in fair price shops. Offenders should be punished severely. Consumers' Councils may also be promoted to protect the interest of the consumers. The Council may be given all protection and executive help and support to fight against malpractices in fair price shops.
6.3.12 Problems of consumers regarding the waiting time:

The consumers feel that they have to wait for a long time to buy their quota. This is due to the irregular supply of commodities from the fair price shops. The irregular supply and uncertainty of supply make the consumers rush to the shops immediately. If the supply is regular and the consumers are assured about the supply of their monthly quota, the long queue in the shops could be avoided.

To solve this problem, the supply management may be streamlined. If fair price shops are adequately supplied the shops can assure supply throughout the month. Thus the length of the queue may be reduced to minimum and consumers need not wait for long time in queue.

6.3.13 Problems of Consumers regarding the behaviour of salesmen in fair price shops:

The Salesmen in fair price shops behave in a rude manner because of the inherent weaknesses in supply management. Moreover their salary is not satisfactory to them. These make the salesmen to resort to malpractices.
They behave rudely just to show to the consumers that they are unquestionable.

To solve this problem, the supply management may be streamlined. The dealers of fair price shops may be provided with normal margin. Otherwise some amount may be granted as subsidy. The Government may give cent per cent salary grant to the fair price shops. To control unscrupulous salesmen, Consumer Protection Council may be encouraged. The consumers could express their grievances and stop ill-treatment in the fair price shops.

Conclusion:

This study is a humble attempt to bring to light consumers' attitude towards fair price shops. This study highlights two aspects such as the satisfaction of consumer, and the problems of consumers in the fair price shops. The attitude of consumers has been quantified and measured. The findings and suggestions of the study provide a better understanding of the problems of consumers in buying commodities in the fair price shops. This study
would pave the way for many more studies in future. For such studies, if this present study helps, the researcher would feel amply rewarded. The researcher dedicates her humble piece of work to the Social Scientists, who have sacrificed their lives for the betterment of society.