

Awareness Regarding Food Safety and Consumer Protection amongst the Women of Dantiwada Village

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ABSTRACT

Large numbers of consumers in India are women, living in rural area. Women consumers are cheated in different ways by middle men. Adulteration and under weighing of goods, selling goods of inferior quality and duplicated goods charging high prices, attractive but thoroughly misleading advertisement in mass media, inadequate services of durable goods after sales etc. All women consumers who are mature enough to take decision and capable of carrying out household activities were selected as population for the present study. The study was conducted in Dantiwada village. For the study, forty Women were randomly selected. A questionnaire method and an interview schedule was used for the purpose of data collection. From the present study, it was depicted that amongst all the respondents, 85% were aware regarding misbranding, 50% were aware regarding food standards and laws, 77.5% were aware regarding maximum retail price, 70% were aware regarding expiry date and 60% were checking net weight of the product. It was noticeable that only 27.5% respondents were aware of nutritional labeling, 5% were aware of ingredient's information and only 32.5% women gave preference to the standardized products. It was shocking to that only 27.5% women were aware about consumer protection acts but neither any of them have any information about consumer protection agencies nor they have utilized their consumer protection rights. Upon asking regarding bill / cash memo, 55% women said that they always ask for bill but the rest of them do not give much importance to it. About 60% of women were having the information about common food adulterants and 62.5% women accepted that they very often have experienced the food adulteration. Almost 45% of women were aware that food adulteration is harmful to health. It was observed from the data that literate women were more aware in comparison of illiterate women. Income level of the women did not show any significant effect on the awareness level. The effect of electronic media on the awareness level of women was higher than that of print media.

Key words: Food Safety, Consumer Protection, Awareness in women

INTRODUCTION

Indian consumers spend the highest percentage of our income on food. Being consumers, it is their right that they get safe

and quality food. It is also expected that they would get maximum returns of their money without compromising on safety and quality of food.

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Large numbers of consumers are women, living in rural area. Women consumers are cheated in different ways by middle men. Adulteration and under weightment of goods, selling goods of inferior quality and duplicated goods charging high prices, attractive but thoroughly misleading advertisement in mass media, inadequate services of durable goods after sales etc.

It is said that unless the women consumers are aware of consumer protection acts, the efforts of the government and voluntary cannot achieve the desired result of protecting consumer rights. Increased consumer knowledge and skills are essential goal of consumer education. Despite of various efforts it is found that 86% consumers are still

unaware of the about consumer protection rights. Thus the present study was conducted to assess the awareness of women consumers of Dantiwada regarding food safety and consumer protection.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All women consumers who are mature enough to take decision and capable of carrying out household activities were selected as population for the present study. The study was conducted in Dantiwada village. For the study purpose, forty women were randomly selected. A questionnaire method and a pre-structures interview schedule were used for the purpose of data collection.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: General Information of Respondent

| Sr. No | Information | Respondents | |
|--------|--------------------------|-------------|------|
| | | numbers | % |
| 1. | Age (in years) | | |
| | a) 18-25 | 3 | 7.5 |
| | b) 25-35 | 12 | 30 |
| | c) Above 35 | 25 | 62.5 |
| 2. | Education | | |
| | a) Illiterate | 5 | 12.5 |
| | b) 10 th std | 20 | 50 |
| | c) Graduate | 12 | 30 |
| | d) Higher education | 3 | 7.5 |
| 3. | Occupation | | |
| | a) Housewife | 28 | 70 |
| | b) Job | 8 | 20 |
| | c) Other profession | 4 | 10 |
| 4. | Monthly income of family | | |
| | a) Below 5,000 | 1 | 2.5 |
| | b) 5,000-10,000 | 11 | 27.5 |
| | c) 15,000-25,000 | 14 | 35 |
| | d) Above 25,000 | 14 | 35 |

All the respondents were selected above the age of 18 years and they are mature enough. Out of total respondents about 62.5% were above the age of 35. There were 12.5% of respondents were illiterate. Majority of them were housewives (70%) and other (30%) were working women. Most of them belong to middle (27.5%) and higher middle class (70%).

It was noted that Television followed by newspaper was the main sources of

information regarding food safety and consumer protection. The advertisement series of “Jago Grahak Jago” has been found the main source of such information.

Table-2 shows the specific information regarding awareness of consumer protection aspects, information regarding labeling, billing, food adulteration and it's hazardous effects to the health, preference given to the standardized food products etc.

Table 2: Awareness regarding Food safety and Consumer Protection

| Sr. No | Points to be considered at the time of purchasing | Respondents | | Education | | | | Income | | | | Media Exposure | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|------|-----------|----|------------|----|---------------|----|--------------|-----|------------------|------|-------------|-----|
| | | | | Literate | | Illiterate | | Higher Income | | Lower Income | | Electronic Media | | Print Media | |
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 1 | Awareness regarding | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Misbranding | 34 | 85 | 31 | 89 | 3 | 60 | 26 | 93 | 8 | 66 | 20 | 50 | 30 | 75 |
| | Food standards and laws | 20 | 50 | 20 | 57 | 0 | - | 17 | 61 | 3 | 25 | 14 | 35 | 19 | 48 |
| | MRP | 31 | 77.5 | 29 | 83 | 2 | 40 | 22 | 51 | 9 | 75 | 28 | 70 | 19 | 48 |
| | Expiry date | 28 | 70 | 28 | 80 | - | - | 16 | 58 | 12 | 30 | 23 | 57.5 | 19 | 48 |
| | Net weight | 24 | 60 | 23 | 66 | 1 | 20 | 15 | 54 | 9 | 75 | 23 | 57.5 | 14 | 23 |
| | Nutrition Labeling | 11 | 27.5 | 11 | 31 | 0 | - | 7 | 25 | 4 | 33 | 9 | 22.5 | 10 | 25 |
| | Ingredients' information | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 0 | - | - | - | 2 | 17 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| 2 | Preference given to the Standardized food product | 13 | 32.5 | 13 | 37 | - | - | 9 | 33 | 4 | 33 | 12 | 30 | 10 | 25 |
| 3 | Awareness Regarding Consumer Protection Aspects | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Knowledge Regarding Consumer Protection Act | 11 | 27.5 | 11 | 31 | - | - | 8 | 29 | 3 | 25 | 8 | 20 | 8 | 20 |
| | Knowledge Regarding Consumer Protection Agencies | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Utilization of Consumer Rights | 0 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | Bill / Cash Memo | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Ask for Cash Memo | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | – Always | 22 | 55 | 20 | 57 | 2 | 40 | 14 | 50 | 8 | 67 | 22 | 55 | 14 | 35 |
| | – Sometimes | 5 | 12.5 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 40 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 17 | 4 | 10 | 2 | 5 |
| | – Never | 13 | 32.5 | 12 | 34 | 1 | 20 | 7 | 25 | 6 | 50 | 11 | 27.5 | 6 | 15 |
| 5 | Awareness Regarding Food Adulteration | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Information about Common Food Adulteration | 24 | 60 | 23 | 66 | 1 | 20 | 16 | 57 | 8 | 67 | 23 | 57.5 | 16 | 40 |
| | Experience of Food Adulteration | 25 | 62.5 | 22 | 63 | 3 | 60 | 13 | 46 | 12 | 100 | 23 | 57.5 | 13 | 33 |
| | How often | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | – Many a times | 17 | 42.5 | 15 | 43 | 2 | 40 | 9 | 32 | 8 | 67 | 16 | 40 | 9 | 23 |
| | – Rare | 8 | 20 | 7 | 20 | 1 | 20 | 4 | 14 | 4 | 33 | 7 | 17.5 | 4 | 10 |
| | – Very rare | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | Harmful effects of Food Adulteration on Health | 18 | 45 | 15 | 42 | 3 | 60 | 10 | 36 | 8 | 67 | 17 | 43 | 9 | 23 |

From the present study, it was depicted that amongst all the respondents, 85% were aware regarding misbranding, 50% were aware regarding food standards and laws, 77.5% were aware regarding maximum retail price, 70% were aware regarding expiry date and 60% were checking net weight of the product. It was noticeable that only 27.5% respondents were aware of nutritional labeling, 5% were aware of ingredient's information and only 32.5% women gave preference to the standardized products. It was shocking to that only 27.5% women were aware about

consumer protection acts but neither any of them have any information about consumer protection agencies nor they have utilized their consumer protection rights. Upon asking regarding bill / cash memo, 55% women said that they always ask for bill but the rest of them do not give much importance to it. About 60% of women were having the information about common food adulterants and 62.5% women accepted that they very often have experienced the food adulteration. Almost 45% of women were aware that food adulteration is harmful to health.

It was observed from the data that literate women are more aware of product labeling information, consumer protection aspects and food adulteration. Income level of the women did not show any significant effect on the awareness level of the women. The effect of electronic media on the knowledge of product labeling information, consumer protection aspects and food adulteration was higher than that of print media.

CONCLUSION

From the present study, it was depicted that amongst all the respondents, 85% were aware regarding misbranding, 50% were aware regarding food standards and laws, 77.5% were aware regarding maximum retail price, 70% were aware regarding expiry date and 60% were checking net weight of the product. It was noticeable that only 27.5% respondents were aware of nutritional labeling, 5% were aware of ingredient's information and only 32.5% women gave preference to the standardized products. Only 27.5% women were aware about consumer protection acts but neither any of them have any information about consumer protection agencies nor they have utilized their consumer protection rights. Upon asking regarding bill / cash memo, 55% women said that they consider it important but the rest of them do not give much importance to it. About 60% of women were having the information about common food adulterants and 62.5% women accepted that they very often have experienced the food adulteration. Almost 45% of women were aware that food adulteration is harmful to health.

Literacy level of women has significant effect on the awareness level of

women regarding product labeling information, consumer protection aspects and food adulteration. Income level of the women did not show any significant effect on the awareness level of the women. The effect of electronic media on the knowledge of product labeling information, consumer protection aspects and food adulteration was higher than that of print media.

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