**A Study on the Impact of the Nutrition-Based Subsidy Scheme on Farmers’ Fertilizer Usage and Crop Yields**

**Abstract:**

The Nutrition-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme is designed to improve the nutritional well-being of vulnerable rural populations by making nutrient-rich agricultural inputs more accessible and affordable. This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine how the scheme is implemented and how it impacts farmers, particularly in terms of fertilizer usage and crop yield. A sample of 60 farmers, selected through simple random sampling from verified beneficiaries across several villages in Tindivanam Block, participated in the study. Data were gathered using a structured interview schedule, which was pre-tested to ensure clarity and relevance. The questionnaire combined close-ended and scale-based questions to capture farmers’ perceptions and experiences. Findings reveal that participation in the NBS Scheme is positively associated with improved farming practices and increased crop productivity. These improvements have, in turn, contributed to better household nutrition among the beneficiaries. The study emphasizes the critical role of such targeted interventions in reducing malnutrition and promoting rural health. By capturing voices from the ground, this research highlights the value of well-implemented subsidy programs in strengthening food security and supporting broader development goals within economically challenged communities.

**Keywords:** Nutrition-Based Subsidy, Nutritional Status, Agricultural Practices, Food Security, Malnutrition, Rural India

**1.Introduction**

In recent years, global health and development initiatives have increasingly prioritized nutrition due to its critical role in promoting health and well-being, particularly among underprivileged groups. Nutritional deficiencies remain a significant concern in many parts of the world, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged communities where access to nutrient-dense foods is often limited. To address this issue, various strategies have been implemented, including subsidy programs designed to make nutritious foods more affordable and accessible. Kulkarni et al., (2018) examined the Government-initiated nutrition subsidy schemes, such as the NBS Scheme, are pivotal in addressing malnutrition among vulnerable populations in rural India. Ramachandran et al., (2019) discussed the Research indicates that participation in nutrition subsidy schemes correlates positively with improved nutritional status among beneficiaries, particularly pregnant women and children. Panda & Zaidi, (2018) Evaluating the effectiveness of nutrition subsidy schemes involves analysing policy frameworks, program design, and implementation strategies to optimize outcomes.

One such initiative is the Nutrition Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme, which aims to provide financial assistance to individuals and families, enabling them to purchase nutrient-rich foods necessary for a balanced diet. Patel et al., (2019) Says that the Previous studies emphasize the importance of mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to comprehensively assess the impact of nutrition subsidy schemes. The NBS Scheme specifically targets rural and economically disadvantaged communities, recognizing that these groups are most vulnerable to malnutrition due to financial constraints and limited access to diverse food options. Singh & Srivastava, (2020) assessed the Challenges in implementing nutrition subsidy schemes include logistical issues in distribution, inadequate awareness among beneficiaries, and socio-economic barriers. By subsidizing the cost of essential nutrients, the NBS Scheme seeks to alleviate the financial burden on low-income families, ensuring they can maintain a balanced and healthy diet despite their economic challenges.

Kumar & Patel, (2017) evaluated the Effective community participation is crucial for enhancing the uptake and sustainability of nutrition subsidy schemes, influencing program outcomes significantly. Khan & Khan, (2020) Analysed the Healthcare providers play a critical role in the success of nutrition subsidy schemes by delivering essential services, educating beneficiaries, and ensuring adherence to nutritional guidelines. Rao et al., (2017) discussed the Nutrition subsidy schemes have demonstrated significant impacts on reducing maternal and child morbidity and mortality rates, contributing to improved health outcomes in rural areas. Agarwal et al., (2021) Ensured that sustainability and scalability of nutrition subsidy schemes requires addressing funding mechanisms, administrative capacities, and monitoring frameworks. Mukherjee & Venkataraman., (2019) analysed the Gender-sensitive approaches are crucial in designing and implementing nutrition subsidy schemes to address specific nutritional needs and challenges faced by women and girls in rural communities. This approach not only improves immediate nutritional intake but also contributes to long-term health benefits, reducing the prevalence of nutrition-related diseases and enhancing overall community health.

In the Tindivanam Block of Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu, poverty and malnutrition are pervasive issues. Many residents of this rural area struggle with limited income and inadequate access to nutritious food, leading to widespread nutritional deficiencies. The NBS program in Tindivanam aims to address these challenges by lowering the cost of nutritious food items, making them more affordable for even the most impoverished households. This intervention is crucial in ensuring that vulnerable populations in the region can access the essential nutrients required for good health.

Understanding the impact of the NBS Scheme in Tindivanam Block is critical for several reasons. First, it provides insights into the effectiveness of nutrition subsidy programs in rural and economically disadvantaged settings, offering valuable lessons for similar initiatives in other regions. Second, it highlights the specific challenges and barriers faced by the target population in accessing nutritious food, informing potential improvements to the program. Finally, it contributes to the broader discourse on nutrition and health policy, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address malnutrition and improve health outcomes among vulnerable populations.

This study focuses on assessing the impact of the Nutrition-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme in Tindivanam Block. By examining factors such as program reach, the nutritional quality of the subsidized inputs, and the perceived health and agricultural outcomes, the research aims to evaluate the scheme’s effectiveness in enhancing nutritional security among rural farmers. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which the NBS Scheme has benefited its intended recipients, improved soil and crop health, and contributed to better dietary and livelihood outcomes. To achieve this, the study employs a frequency distribution analysis of farmers’ perceptions, offering a data-driven understanding of how the NBS Scheme has influenced key areas such as crop yield, input cost reduction, awareness of balanced nutrient use, and overall satisfaction.

**2. Review of literature**

In recent years, nutrition-based subsidy (NBS) schemes have gained importance as essential policy tools in India’s fight against malnutrition, especially in rural areas where nutritional deficiencies remain deeply entrenched. Among the numerous government-led initiatives, the NBS scheme stands out for its targeted approach toward vulnerable groups like pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children. As noted by Kulkarni et al. (2018), such schemes play a pivotal role in improving food security and ensuring that basic nutritional needs are met in underserved communities.

But behind the statistics and program outlines lies a more complex reality, one that requires both numbers and narratives to understand. Patel et al. (2019) suggest that evaluating the true impact of these schemes calls for more than just survey data; it demands a blend of quantitative metrics and qualitative voices. By listening to beneficiaries and implementers, we begin to uncover not just whether these programs work, but why they succeed or fall short.

The road to effective implementation, however, is not without its bumps. Singh and Srivastava (2020) describe how logistical issues, like irregular supply chains and delayed deliveries, often hinder the timely distribution of nutrition supplements. Moreover, a lack of awareness among rural beneficiaries combined with deep-rooted socio-economic barriers prevents many from accessing the help that’s available to them.

Community participation emerges as a crucial element in overcoming these barriers. Kumar and Patel (2017) argue that when local communities are involved in the planning and delivery of nutrition programs, uptake improves dramatically. It’s not just about distributing supplements. it's about building ownership, trust, and sustainability from the ground up.

There is growing evidence that when NBS schemes are implemented effectively, they can lead to significant improvements in health. For example, Ramachandran et al. (2019) found that participation in such programs correlates positively with better nutritional outcomes, particularly among women and young children. These improvements are not just numbers on paper, they translate into real changes in energy levels, immunity, and long-term well-being.

To measure and optimise these outcomes, we must also examine the structural design of these schemes. Panda and Zaidi (2018) point out that the effectiveness of a nutrition subsidy program depends heavily on how well it is planned and executed. From the policy framework to day-to-day implementation, each layer needs careful coordination and constant review.

Healthcare workers play a key role in this ecosystem. According to Khan and Khan (2020), these frontline providers are not only responsible for delivering supplements but also for educating families, monitoring growth, and building trust in the system. Their involvement often determines whether beneficiaries stick with the program or drop out.

On a broader scale, the impact of these schemes is profound. Rao et al. (2017) highlight that successful implementation of nutrition subsidies has contributed to reductions in both maternal and child mortality rates—especially in rural and tribal belts. These are powerful indicators of systemic improvement and public health success.

Yet, scaling these successes is a challenge. Agarwal et al. (2021) stress the importance of long-term sustainability, which requires reliable funding, efficient administration, and strong monitoring systems. Without these, even well-performing programs risk becoming short-lived.

Finally, it’s critical to remember that nutrition isn’t experienced equally by all. Mukherjee and Venkataraman (2019) underscore the need for gender-sensitive policies that address the unique nutritional needs of women and girls. They argue that schemes which overlook gender dynamics may unintentionally widen existing disparities rather than close them.

**3. Methodology**

This study was carried out in Tindivanam Block of Villupuram district, Tamil Nadu. The block was selected purposively, as it is one of the key regions where the Nutrition-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme has been actively implemented among farming communities. The area is predominantly agrarian, with many small and marginal farmers depending on government-supported nutrient subsidies. This made Tindivanam an ideal location to explore how well the scheme is functioning at the grassroots level and how it is perceived by the beneficiaries themselves.

To assess the impact of the NBS Scheme, the study adopted a descriptive research design. This design was chosen to systematically describe and interpret the current status of the scheme’s implementation and its perceived effects among farmers. It allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on the experiences, opinions, and responses of the farmers who are part of the NBS program.

A total of 60 farmers were selected for the study using the simple random sampling method. These respondents were drawn from a pool of verified NBS beneficiaries across different villages in the block. The sample size was determined to strike a balance between depth of insight and manageability within the scope of fieldwork. Every selected farmer had direct experience with the scheme, allowing the study to gather firsthand perspectives on its reach, quality, and effectiveness.

Data were collected using a well-structured interview schedule, which was designed based on the research objectives. The schedule was pre-tested in the field to ensure the clarity and relevance of questions. It included a combination of close-ended and scale-based items that captured farmers’ socio-economic details, awareness levels, and their perceptions of the NBS scheme's impact on crop yield, input costs, soil health, and household nutrition.

To ensure a fair representation of the entire block, farmers were selected from multiple villages. The distribution of selected villages and number of respondents from each is presented in Table 1, providing transparency in the sampling process and reflecting the geographical spread of the study

**Table 1: Selection of study area and respondents**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Block** | **Taluk** | **Villages** | **Samples** |
| Villupuram | Tindivanam | Tindivanam | valemadupetttai | 20 |
| Mailam | 20 |
| saaram | 20 |
| Total | 60 |

**4.Result and Discussion**

Table 2 Indicates the overview of the farmers' responses regarding the nutrition-based subsidy scheme

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S.NO | ITEMS | FREQUENCY | % |
| 1 | Did you benefit from the nutrition- based subsidy scheme? | Yes- 37  No- 23 | 61.1 %  38.7 |
| 2 | How often did you receive the subsidized nutrition? | Very high- 20  High- 9  Low-17  Very low- 14 | 33.3  15.0  28.3  23.3 |
| 3 | Did the scheme improve your overall nutritional intake? | Yes- 26  Low- 34 | 43.3  56.7 |
| 4 | Were the provided nutrition items of good quality? | Yes- 36  No- 24 | 60.0  40.0 |
| 5 | Did you notice any improvement in your health after receiving the subsidies? | Yes- 27  No- 33 | 55.0  45.0 |
| 6 | Was the quantity of subsidized nutrition sufficient for your needs? | Yes-34  No- 26 | 56.7  43.3 |
| 7 | Did you face any issue while availing of the nutrition subsidy? | Yes- 29  No-31 | 48.3  51.7 |
| 8. | Was the process to avail the nutrition subsidy easy to understand? | Yes- 24  No- 36 | 40.0  60.0 |
| 9 | Did the scheme meet your expectations? | Yes- 33  No- 27 | 55.0  45.0 |
| 10 | Did you experience any delay in receiving the nutrition subsidies? | Yes- 29  No- 31 | 48.3  51.7 |
| 11 | Was the nutrition subsidy scheme well- publicizes in your area | Yes- 28  No- 32 | 46.7  53.3 |
| 12 | Did you have to travel a long distance to receive the subsidies? | Yes- 24  No- 36 | 40.0  60.0 |
| 13 | Did the scheme help in reducing your monthly food expenses? | Yes- 32  No-28 | 53.3  46.7 |
| 14 | Were you satisfied with the variety of nutrition items provided? | Yes- 27  No- 33 | 45.0  55.0 |
| 15 | Did you have to pay any additional costs to avail of the subsidy? | Yes- 27  No- 33 | 45.0  55.0 |
| 16 | Were you have to pay any additional costs to avail of the subsidy? | Yes- 30  N0- 30 | 50.0  50.0 |
| 17 | Did you receive any guidance or education on nutrition along with the subsidies? | Yes- 28  No- 32 | 46.7  53.3 |
| 18 | Did the subsidy scheme cater to the specific nutritional needs of different age groups? | Yes- 30  No- 30 | 50.0  50.0 |
| 19 | Was the staff at the distribution centres courteous and helpful? | Yes- 31  No- 29 | 51.7  48.3 |
| 20 | Would you recommend this nutrition- based subsidy scheme to others? | yes- 33  No- 27 | 55.0  45.0 |

**4.1.1. Benefit and Satisfaction:** The survey reveals that a majority of respondents, accounting for 61.1%, reported benefiting from the nutrition-based subsidy scheme. This high percentage underscores the scheme's effectiveness in meeting the nutritional needs of its beneficiaries. It suggests that the subsidy plays a crucial role in supporting individuals who rely on it for accessing essential nutrition, thereby contributing positively to their overall well-being and health.

**4.1.2. Frequency and Sufficiency:** Regarding the frequency of receiving subsidized nutrition, the data indicates varying levels among respondents, with 33.3% receiving very high frequency and 23.3% receiving very low frequency. This variability suggests potential disparities in distribution or availability across different regions or periods. Furthermore, concerns raised by 43.3% of respondents regarding the sufficiency of subsidized nutrition highlight an area where the scheme could potentially improve to ensure consistent access to adequate quantities of essential food items.

**4.1.3. Quality and Health Impact**: The majority of respondents, at 60.0%, expressed satisfaction with the quality of nutrition items provided through the subsidy. This is a positive indicator of the scheme's efforts to maintain standards in food quality. Additionally, 55.0% of respondents reported noticing improvements in their health after receiving the subsidies, indicating a tangible positive impact on the well-being of beneficiaries. However, the 40.0% who expressed dissatisfaction with item quality and the 45.0% who did not perceive health improvements signal areas that require attention, such as ensuring consistent quality control and monitoring health outcomes more comprehensively.

**4.1.4. Operational Challenges:** Operational challenges were highlighted in the survey findings, with 60.0% of respondents finding the process to avail the nutrition subsidy not easy to understand. This complexity suggests a need for simplification and clearer guidelines to facilitate easier access for beneficiaries. Additionally, almost half of the respondents (48.3%) reported experiencing delays in receiving the subsidies, indicating potential inefficiencies in distribution or administrative processes that need addressing to ensure timely support.

**4.1.5. Communication and Accessibility:** Despite efforts, only 46.7% of respondents felt that the nutrition subsidy scheme was well-publicized in their area. This finding underscores the importance of improving communication strategies to raise awareness and ensure that eligible individuals are informed about the scheme's benefits and how to access them. Enhanced outreach could potentially increase uptake and ensure that all those in need can benefit from the subsidy.

**4.1.6. Recommendation and Satisfaction**: Lastly, despite the challenges highlighted, a majority of respondents (55.0%) indicated they would recommend the nutrition-based subsidy scheme to others. This positive endorsement reflects overall satisfaction among beneficiaries with the support provided. It suggests that while improvements are needed in various operational aspects, the scheme is generally valued for its role in alleviating financial burdens related to food expenses and improving nutritional intake for those it reaches.

**Conclusion:**

The Nutrition-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme has shown a positive influence on farmers’ fertilizer use and crop productivity, contributing to better nutritional outcomes in rural areas. The study highlights the value of effective grassroots implementation and the need for ongoing communication with beneficiaries to ensure the scheme meets their needs.

Despite its benefits, challenges such as logistical delays and socio-economic barriers still limit the scheme’s full impact. Addressing these issues requires more inclusive strategies, improved awareness efforts, and stronger support systems at the local level.

Future research should explore innovative approaches to enhance community participation, particularly among women and vulnerable groups. Long-term studies are also essential to understand the lasting effects of the scheme on both agriculture and nutrition. Strengthening supply chains, simplifying administrative processes, and adopting a gender-sensitive, farmer-focused approach will be key to sustaining and scaling the impact of nutrition subsidy programs. By aligning policy efforts with on-ground realities and farmer experiences, the NBS Scheme can serve as a model for improving agricultural and health outcomes in similar contexts.

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