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RECENT TRENDS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-BASED EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA- A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUMBAI

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Abstract

India is one of the fastest-growing nations in population and several growth indices. Still, India faces growing concern about poverty and food insecurity. Food insecurity has several dimensions today besides the four essential criteria that are most required. Food must be required as a basic amenity to be a means of sustenance, development, and individual personal growth. Food security concerns have multiple dimensions ever evolving with time, space, and the complexity of human needs. These need to be addressed effectively so that there can be proper awareness of which complexity in this situation needs proper addressing rather than simply improving upon the exact dimensions over and over again. In this respect, the paper draws a comparison of the four dimensions of food insecurity and how their characteristics have changed over time. Similarly, the paper shall also take into consideration the change in the general public participation in dealing with the food insecurity concerns in terms of initiatives, awareness, and implementation of several public domain policies.

Keywords: Food insecurity; recent trends; India; dimensions;

INTRODUCTION

The terminology trend has been defined as a general development or change in a situation or how people behave (Cambridge University Dictionary) (Fischer et al., 2014). Thus, any concept or topic undergoes a constant pace of change. This change has always been recorded in the form of research works on any (Renehan et al., 2016; Xiao & Smith, 2006). At the same time, the development or directional change also happens through social, economic, political, and legal interference, which needs to be given due credence to be able to develop more potential for research and further development.

Concerns regarding the basic necessities of human nature have been plaguing the field of social sciences for years gone by. It has been stated well by the classical economist Thomas Malthus in his work called "An Essay on the Principle of Population"; that population increased in geometric progression, i.e. (2,4,16…) while production of food increased in the form of arithmetic progression (2,4,6,8….) (Davis et al., 2021). This gave

rise to several questions with respect to how the world population would deal with this particular concern. While prediction of Malthus for a doomsday looming on the horizon did not come true Xiao & Smith, (2006), the fact that the ever-growing population would fall short of resources to fulfill the basic necessity of food did come true. Since then, men have been struggling to keep in check through both protective and predictive methods the need for food (Byerlee & Fischer, 2002). However, technological development and other advancements slowed down the concern but did not resolve the problem.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is qualitative descriptive method (Colorafi & Evans, 2016). The type of data used in this study is qualitative data, which is categorized into two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Data sources are obtained through library study techniques that refer to sources available both online and offline such as: scientific journals, books and news sourced from trusted sources. These sources are gathered based on discussion and linked from one piece of information to another. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interview and research. This data is analyzed and then conclusions are drawn (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dimension of Food Security:

As we know that the food security concern has been ever-growing. The issue is not only about getting proper meals but rather about 4 essential aspects (Arora, 2018):

1. Availability: For several years to begin with post-second-world war, most nations were in a constant dilemma to ensure food availability. However, over the year, most nations realized and have taken enough measures to address availability concerns. With constant natural and man-made disasters looming overhead, humans learned to develop methods and techniques to maintain buffer stocks. Processed foods helped solve the purpose of keeping food for a more extended period so that food was always now available.
2. Accessibility: Accessibility refers to food being easily accessed without any form of discrimination. Discrimination is a fundamental concern of our society. We have been stratified on the grounds of race, religion, culture, and boundaries to a large extent. Often such a mindset tends to hurt the accessibility of food.
3. Affordability: refers to the financial aspect of the food consumption process. It is about the value of food in monetary terms. This extends to the fact that there must be sufficient money to obtain sufficient nutritious food without compromising or abstaining from any significant evil associated with it. This will include keeping up with other social needs like education, housing, and the general well-being of people.
4. Adequacy: The term Adequacy refers to people's specific nutrition and dietary needs, which have to be satisfied through food consumption. At the same time, this term will also extend to the fact that often there is not enough good healthy food that is available and raises concerns regarding binge eating, obesity, and concerns concerning customer issues, and so on.

Currently, there is the issue of a double burden that the economy faces. This burden refers to the countries today facing chronic hunger and production issues on one end. On the other hand, the same nations also tend to account for high levels of obesity and cardiac issues (Smith Jervelund & Eikemo, 2021). This double burden of food security threatens several nations at a point of breakage.

The Notion of Systematic Risk

In 2008 when global food prices shot up with persistent inflation with no way of a backward trend, it made the world realize that food is essential that individuals have taken for granted for too long (Haldane & May, 2011). In this context, food insecurity concerns were seen through the notion of systematic risk. The term systematic risk refers to the risk that is attributed to the whole market such that it does not discriminate any element or variable. Food security is facing particular specific systematic risk (de Raymond et al., 2021), which includes the following:

1. The growing complexity of food systems linked to globalization involving new interdependencies (and dependencies) and related risks well beyond production alone;
2. Climate change and its consequences for agriculture;
3. The sustainability of food systems (maintaining primary resources, limiting the negative impact of production and food on ecosystems);
4. Global demography (population growth, urbanization, diet change).

The concept of systematic risk is something that has yet to be addressed previously in terms of food security, as there was no proper recognition of the issue. Now that the globe faces several dilemmas on this concept, there is an identification of what it entails and a need to address it. The global pandemic of COVID-19 delivered several new solutions to this systematic risk. A buffer could be created through a community-based solution system. It gave people time to invest in sustainable choices (Gregory & Wellman, 2001). Agricultural choices changed; local foods once again became popular due to the ease of availability. Climate change did undergo some reversal which turned out to help agricultural production. At the same time, people started valuing the food they consumed instead of taking it for granted. Distribution channels were improved, and more people got involved in preparing and distributing healthier food in the community in order to improve immunity and ensure better survival.

Technology has posed a severe concern in the field of the production of food. With the growth of biotechnological foods, there is more concern both regarding the availability and adequacy of food in the future. We are growing more food with the help of technology rather than leaving it to the order of nature, which is regularly intensifying all the systematic risk concerns (Elliott et al., 2014). This needs to be addressed as well in the long run.

Community Kitchen (Community-based efforts)

The covid-19 pandemic changed the domino impact of the food insecurity situation. Everyone started hoarding and taking care of what to eat and what not to, with the growing

concern of the disease looming across the globe amidst the long-term global lockdown. Superfoods and immunity boosters became a sought-after central element, and it was realized that it was the need of the hour (Bhalla et al., 2016). During such grave hours of peril, women's self-help groups and local community kitchens came to the rescue for several day-wage earners and immigrants in Mumbai. The concept of a community kitchen suddenly became a viable and popular choice (GOLDBERG, 2014). Soon it was realized that collection efforts could ensure that at least hunger, a growing concern, could help resolve the issue.

As the pandemic ended, it paved the way for the closure of many of these effort-based community kitchens. However, three models that distinctively continued catering to the exact needs emerged. The langar system by the Sikhs has a sacred history, and the Dawoodi-Bohra community kitchen was an approach that had survived and sustained for almost a decade prior to the pandemic, and lastly, the ISCKON meals system, which too had been a well-planned and practiced kitchen system serving a majority of people. The diagram below gives us a basic ideation of how a community kitchen may function :

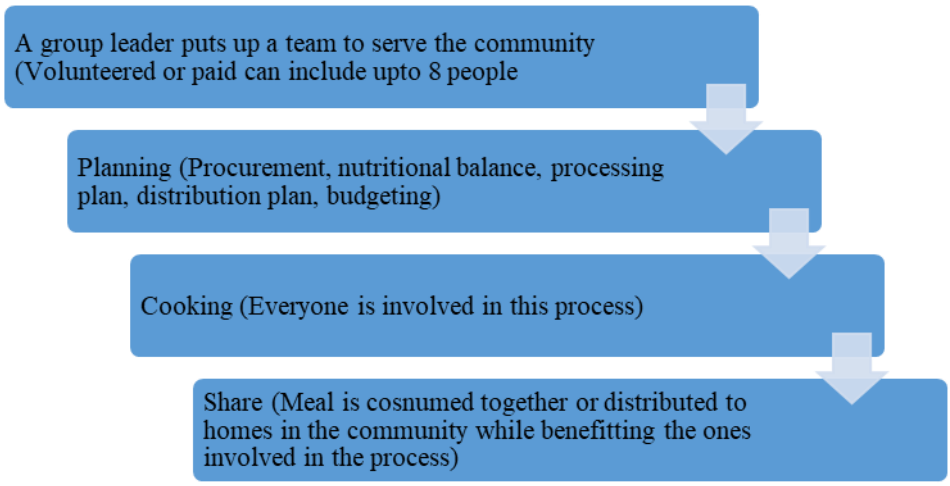

Figure 1 Diagram community kitchen

CONCLUSION

Food is a basic necessity. The human complexity of having more wants and limited resources is never-ending. With time the food insecurity concerns will grow more complex, especially with the growth of technology. There needs to be a way in which the human rights of food security have to be preserved. The way forward needs to be a united effort where tried and tested traditional methods of availing food, assessing it, and making it affordable and adequate should all be considered rather than looking at each of these components in an individual manner.

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