

MGNREGA and Women Empowerment: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Creating jobs has been the goal of every government. Since independence, a large number of programmes have been implemented to eradicate poverty and unemployment from the country in the rural area. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one such programme introduced by government of India. The primary goals of the MGNREGA is job creation, and poverty reduction. Regarded as having a pioneering effect on rural impoverishment and joblessness, MGNREGA's original concepts of guaranteed employment have been acknowledged. This program has received a great deal of attention, being carefully examined, comprehended by everyone, and is riddled with fundamental conflicts. In this paper, the analyses of various facets of MGNREGA by many researchers, academics, and government institutions' are highlighted.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Women Empowerment, Rural Area, Literature Review

1. Introduction

MGNREGA is different from other programs like Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana, Swarna Jayanti Rozgar Yojana, etc in many significant respects. This is one of the few programmes that truly attracted the attention of the general public. With the beginning of this landmark initiative on August 23, 2005, and notification on September 5, 2005, the Lok Sabha assured anybody actively looking for job for a 100 days of full year. MGNREGA was able to address a number of issues with one sweep, including the employment of women, financial inclusion, sustainable rural development, the environmental aspects, and much more.

The government is always making creative and productive attempts to provide employment to women through this program. According to this act, women must make up a minimum of one-third of those employment.

2. Previous Studies on MGNREGA

Ambasta, Pramathesh, PS Vijay Ahankar and Miher Shah (2008) highlighted that NREGA is one of the strongest and most potent government programme for the total makeover of rural regions. NREGA to realize its full potential need to see an increase in crop production to the most underdeveloped areas of India. It will also lead to generate increased rural incomes, the development of alternative livelihoods, water security, and job possibilities in rural regions. These livelihoods means including of harvesting water, livestock, and planting trees.

Ghose, Ajit (2010) believes that the government should not rely just on special programs to improve job circumstances. Jobless growth basically deals with employment that doesn't result in higher productivity. Instead of using special programs, constructive investment programs may reduce the gap between labour incentives and productivity. One such initiative that might result in an income transfer to the impoverished is NREGA, if it is used effectively. More sustainably, the unorganized sector's job condition may also be addressed through this programme.

Ghose, Jayanti (2005) has said that MGNREGA may continue to have a significant influence on the Indian economy even if it were just half implemented. Since a long time ago, the Indian economy has been afflicted by disguised employment, mostly in agriculture, where there has been an overabundance of labour working in a small number of agricultural regions. Programs such as MGNREGA may be used to effectively mobilize the excess labour force.

Hirway, Indira (2005) emphasized that the purpose of Employment Guarantee Schemes (EGS) is to allow people to apply for jobs so as to ensure that the legislation is appropriately implemented. A well-thought-out approach to execution and methodical planning may improve the poor's standard of living. The impoverished will benefit from a combined effort by the State EGS and Centre's EGS. The effective instrument of MGNREGA should be used to reduce poverty in addition to being a supportive of the pro-poor policy.

Himansu (2011) discovered that MGNREGA's impacts were clearly apparent. Based on data from the 66th round of the National Sample Survey, there was a 4 percent growth in the casual wage rates of rural males and females between 2005 and 2010. He also discovered that the MGNREGA has successfully lifted the majority of the impoverished by addressing their most susceptible issues. According to a comparison of the 66th and 61th rounds of the National Sample Survey, the total number of public works started and finished under MGNREGA has grown eightfold. This indicates that not only has MGNREGA improved the lives of rural impoverished people, but it has also succeeded in producing beneficial public resources for the rural individuals.

Bahugana, B. Rahul and Pandey, Dr. Akhilesh Tiwari and Soodam, Vishal (2016) concluded in their study that MGNREGA had a major positive impact on the socioeconomic welfare of the local population which was carried out in disaster-affected districts of Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand state of India. The program's primary goal was to create a social safety net against hunger and poverty by offering a steady income through guaranteed employment in their home communities. This aim has been effectively accomplished by the program. As a consequence of this scheme, several villages volunteered to do irregular, unskilled labour.

Ranaware, K and Das, Upasak and Kulkarani, A. and Narayan (2015) carried out a study with 4881 workers of the more than 4100 works generated in Maharashtra under the MGNREGA. Since it continues to be a highly successful and innovative tool for generating jobs in the countryside, a critical evaluation of MGNREGA is necessary when trying to tackle the worrisome levels of disparity between rural and urban regions. This research revealed information gaps about the degree of interdependence among employment, reducing poverty, and equitable growth. Consequently, research into the developmental structure of MGNREGA was impeded. A large percentage of users (90%) thought the works were helpful and advantageous for a significant number of impoverished farmers. Although the general public's opinion that MGNREGA does nothing constructive seems to be misguided, there is room for enhancements to the program's design, implementation, and task selection.

According to **Shah, Amrita and Kapur, Mehta, Aasha and Vishnathan Pozhemkandanath and Johnson, Nicky (2018)**, MGNREGA continues to be India's most distinctive and significant programme to generate jobs in rural areas. They used actual data from official websites for their investigation, and they came to some intriguing conclusions that even if MGNREGA has shown good performance in the past, there may be a lot of difficulties ahead. The possibility for the program's efficacy in the future might hinge on how the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the rural poor evolve over time, as well as how much adaptation and alteration has been made in the past to accommodate changing patterns. **Bhatia, Bela and Dreze, Jean (2006)** completed a study in two Jharkhand districts and revealed several issues with the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme's execution, many of which might be seen as early-stage concerns. Comparatively, they came at the same conclusion as another group of researchers in Dungarpur, Rajasthan. The bulk of rural poor were given work cards as a precautionary step to fix these discrepancies. Those living in rural areas sometimes endure terrible conditions, but this initiative has given them hope for a brighter future. There was progress in establishing accountability, openness, and following the rules set up by the government. The amount of corruption has decreased as a result of this measure. **Jacob, Arun and Richard Vargese (2006)** noticed that the program has been successfully implemented in Kerala. The state was instrumental in disseminating accurate information about the program and its implications to the rural poor. As a result, wage payments have been made on schedule, dishonesty has abridged, and the involvement of women has increased. The government took many severe actions to ensure that the program was properly implemented in rural regions.

B. MGNREGA and Women Empowerment

Indu, Navjyoti (2018) emphasized that MGNREGA certainly enhanced the quality of life for women. The government must enhance the amount of employment and provide timely payments due to the rising demand for the job. Women in particular have profited from MGNREGA jobs because they have become more financially independent, more self-assured, more empowered, more likely to achieve food security, and more knowledgeable of their rights as workers. This has changed the trajectory of rural communities since it has opened doors for women, SC/ST people, and others who were previously excluded.

Arya, A.P and Meghna, S and Ambily, A (2017) studied the women who benefited from MGNREGA in the Kollam and Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. They found MGNREGA had a profound effect on women's economic independence by altering their purchasing patterns and improving their standard of living. The empowerment of women in their homes has been enhanced by the fact that they alone decide how to spend the money they receive from MGNREGA. The production of assets and the improvement of living conditions for the rural poor are caused by shifts in rural people's ways of making a living through MGNREGA. Many people living in rural areas rely on a combination of agricultural and non-agricultural occupations for their livelihood.

Bhat, Basharat and Mariyappa (2016) investigated the partaking of women in the MGNREGA program in the Wahipura village in the Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir and established that the Indian government launched this programme to boost the self-esteem of unskilled workers, particularly women. Before MGNREGA, the situation of women in rural J&K was terrible and they frequently faced exploitation. Since MGNREGA helps reducing gender discrimination by paying men and women the same amounts of wages, women perceive that they have been compensated fairly.

Kelkar, Govind (2011) remarked that women's employment means women's empowerment, in a broad sense and aids in the reduction of disparities between men and women. Some of the most important aspects of women's empowerment that have contributed to a shift in power dynamics between genders are economic inclusion (through work, skill development, and access to financial markets) and possession of assets (through land, housing, and technology). Increasing numbers of women are taking an active role in the improvement of their homes and communities as well. In his opinion, the true scope of MGNREGA's effects requires more investigation.

Priyadarshini, S (2014) found that thousands of homes in Tamil Nadu have benefited from MGNREGA programme, irrespective of its flaws. Its detrimental effects on agricultural operations and the standard of village assets are evident as most of the rural workers opting out of agricultural employment in favour of MGNREGA. Participation in MGNREGA was associated with a sense of empowerment for around 70 percent of the women who worked there.

Desai, Sonalde (2018) discovered that several barriers, including discrimination in the workplace, a lack of equal pay for equal work, and other forms of gender bias in the workplace, diminish women's empowerment, but the precise nature and degree to which these factors exert their influence has not been well investigated. Places where women are not allowed to access their rights to work are known as blocked job opportunities. Women's employment and its cyclical influence on their financial security may be studied through MGNREGA, which is an unparalleled chance. Using a new method, researchers looked at how often women and men worked for payment in rural regions participating in MGNREGA. They discovered that women had a higher involvement rate than males.

Narayan, Sudha and Upasak Das (2014) used the National Sample Survey for the 68th employment-unemployment round 2011-12 to investigate gender differences participation and rationing in MGNREGA. Researchers found that a differentiation policy was necessary to ensure that women from underrepresented groups, which includes widows and mothers with young children, had the same rights to MGNREGA program. There were three major concerns found with the program. The issues at hand were whether or not women have the same privileges to be paid employment benefits, whether or not they have input into factors design and implementation, and whether or not they share equally in the profits from public works. They came to the view that the state should take a more proactive stance in tackling issues of a higher order, such as condition of workplace, administrative discrimination, issues of sensitivity among implementation personnel, and variances within and between subpopulations.

Vij, Sumit and Manoj Jatav (2017) carried out research on women in MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and exposed that women's involvement in the program has been good enough in both states. Using the gender and development framework (GAD), they looked at the social and financial well-being of rural women in certain communities through the lens of their ability to make decisions at home and within society at large. The MGNREGA wage were determined to be far lower than those supplied by other casual jobs and were therefore insufficient to meet the financial needs of the family. This was a major factor in the falling enthusiasm of the workers of MGNREGA, which in turn led the rural poor to seek over alternative means of subsistence even if jobs were available in the surrounding regions.

Dr G. Xavier, G. Mari (2014) noted that the 11th Five Year Plan marked a shift in perspective about women's employment. It emphasized that women had an important role in fostering societal and economic progress. The United Nations (2013) cited the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India were two exemplary programs that have effectively supported women. Results showed that MGNREGA led to

higher incomes and expenditures, a better quality of life, and more empowerment for women in traditionally male-dominated rural societies. However, numerous health issues were plaguing the rural poor due to factors such as hot climate, lack of free time, and inadequate workplace amenities. Among them were aches and pains, dizziness, headaches, and generalized malaise. Furthermore, due to the lack of versatility in the MGNREGA Programme, women were unable to juggle their multiple duties at home and in the workplace. According to the findings, majority of MGNREGA revenues were spent on family food consumption.

Gyaneshwar, D (2016) highlighted the need of tapping into the country's vast female population for economic growth across all sectors, since women make up a disproportionately large portion of India's persistently poor. MGNREGA has helped women getting jobs, helping to earn a living wage, and provides work in safe environments despite there are some negative aspects of it. MGNREGA shines a focus on women's issues because it has improved women's living conditions by guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. The following issues need attention such as corruption, a lack of attention in childcare facilities, payment irregularities, societal attitudes, gender discrimination, and lack of knowledge about women rights.

Pragabhal, Das K.V (2017) pointed out that empowering women economically is a precondition for eradicating abuse and exploitation, achieving parity in the society, and enhancing social opportunity structures. Women are more affected than men by environmental resources. Improved health, greater education, equitable possession of profitable assets, and gender equity are all necessary condition for empowerment of women.

Sharma, Vishnu Kant, Kumar Ashvini (2013) investigated women's empowerment in the state of Uttar Pradesh. According to their findings, MGNREGA has contributed to the development of social and economic infrastructure in rural regions, the stabilization of people's livelihoods, and the halting of rural relocation. Women make up 16.97 percent of Uttar Pradesh's workforce. The biggest concentration of female employees in terms of person days were in the Sonbhadra district. More women are leaving the house to work in traditionally male-dominated fields like banking and Panchayat administration because of MGNREGA.

Ahangar, Gowar Bashir (2011) highlighted the significant improvement in women's conditions brought out by several literacy, awareness, and job programs, including MGNREGA. They discovered that people were paying for everyday living expenditures, medication, and loan repayments using the money they received from MGNREGA. The MGNREGA programmes were chosen due to the lower potential for accidents on the job site. They proposed that a faster registration procedure might entice small and marginal farmers to join MGNREGA.

3. Conclusion

Several studies by various international organizations, NGOs, and government organizations have examined various aspects of MGNREGA, including rural employment and growth, the employment and empowerment of women. According to some studies, MGNREGA has given a hope to the rural poor, given women a chance to work, and given them greater empowerment. MGNREGA has to fix the problems that previous studies have brought to light, such as pay delays, corruptions, and a lack of transparency in their monitoring process to make ensure the intended beneficiaries get their hands on all of the advantages. There is still a large scope of study has to be carried out to comprehend the effect of MGNREGA on women's empowerment and employment effusively.

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