

Impact of MNREGA on Women Empowerment: A Study of Mahendergarh District (Haryana)

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) 2005 seems to be a more advanced and ideal scheme which directly gives “right to employment” to the deprived and marginalised section of the society and also transforms the area concerned. MNREGA scheme was implemented in selected districts all over the country in 2006. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (act) scheme was a joint venture of the central and state government, sharing a ratio of 90:10. Under the MNREGA scheme for the first time, material and wage ratio (60:40) was fixed at the district level government, which proved to be advantageous for women and landless labourers. Engagement of contractors and use of labour displacing machines are banned by the government. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) furnishes an official guarantee of 100 days employment with wages in a financial year to every rural household, with a reservation of at least 33% for the women workers. MNREGA also make the assets which can develop the area. In Haryana during 2006, first phase of MNREGA was implemented in Mahendergarh and Sirsa districts. MNREGA plays an important role to meet the practical as well as planned requirements for participation of women. It has become an instrument of empowerment of women in rural areas which has improved their quality of living and economic condition. This study aims to analyse the role of MNREGA on women empowerment in the Mahendergarh district of Haryana.

Keywords: - Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Women Empowerment, Socio-economic & Political Conditions.

Introduction

In the Indian society, the socio-economic status of women usually depends on the status of her husband or family and her individual achievements are rarely considered (Neeraja 2013:12). Even today women are viewed as a property who depend on their husband. No country in the world treats both its women and men equally. 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner (according to United Nations). Gender bias is clearly

seen in our society. A daughter is rarely preferred as much as a son. Female children are discriminated in all the spheres of our society. It is a fact that “women make up to 50% of the world population, comprise 33.3% of the official labour force, perform nearly 66.6% of all working hours, receive 10% of the world’s income and own less than 1% of world’s property”, (UNO, 1982). The Indian Constitution guarantees equality to all, irrespective of sex and caste but in reality, this equality is hardly practiced (Neeraja 2013:13). Today, the economic

development of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development. However, girls are still illtreated and discriminated on the basis of gender by the parents. Women are seen as not sources of income but rather as ones who are supposed to leave their parents house after getting married. Their development is treated as an ineffective effort. The objective of women's development however, it is not only to increase the income and standard of life of the families, but also to participate in the decision making process and be at par with men and empower them with their status and self-respect in the family and society. One of the major reasons why women's progress is slow is that the majority of men do not or are not ok with women working outside the homes (Neeraja 2013:13). This is because of the false sense of male self-importance that has been conditioned by centuries of tradition, and are not ready to accept the measure of financial independence and its assurance among women. Women are often seen as somebody's daughter, wife or mother and not individually as a woman of self-identity.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, "Women must not look to men for protection. They must rely on their own strength, given appropriate skill and opportunities of decision- making; women can prove that they are no less than man"

In a developing state, women have worked but the rural areas still need a lot of change.

Empowerment has become a widely used term. It emerged during the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1960s. India has a historical tradition of a male dominated or patriarchal society. Where all sources of earning or economic activities is controlled by the man. Women are identified with the role of just giving birth to babies and rearing them and the family.

In India, the government is also taking an initiative to empower women by adopting several policies and programmes in the first five-year plan (1951-56). The women's welfare approach is taken place to the development in the sixth five year plan (1980-85). Also, the development to empowerment of women's welfare in ninth five year plan (1997-2002) and observed in the year 2001 as women empowerment which means have the right to control material assets, intellectual resources and ideology (Neeraja 2013:14).

But even after 75 years of independence, women's condition in the Indian society has not improved much. Still women work force is very low in comparison to men. Decision to participate in economic activities is still dependent on the male or other members of the family. In the urban areas, women are in a better economic position than in the rural areas. The Indian society quite patriarchal and orthodox lack education and opportunities in the rural areas, limit the women financially depriving them of economic empowerment. In rural areas, few government sponsored schemes are the last avenue for the working women. This study aims to design the access to women workers of MNREGA to women empowerment.

Women empowerment can be brought about through both qualitative and quantitative measures.

Indicators of women empowerment

Women participation in decision making qualitative indicators

- Increase in self-esteem, individual and collective confidence.
- Increase the knowledge and awareness of women and especially in areas of women health, nutrition, reproductive rights, legal rights, literacy, etc., depending on the programme.
- Increase or decrease in workloads of women as the new programme.

- Changes in the roles and responsibility in the family and in the community.
- Visible increase or decrease in levels of domestic violence perpetrated on women and girl child.
- Change in society like social customs e.g. child marriage, dowry discrimination against widows, etc.
 - Positive change in social attitudes amongst the community members towards discrimination against women and the girl child.
- Awareness and recognition of women's economic contribution within and outside the household.
- Women deciding on what type of work she can do and have control on her income and expenditure.

Women participation in decision making quantitative indicators

- Democracy trends:
 - Sex ratio
 - Life expectancy at birth
 - Average age of marriage
 - Material/mortality rates
- Number of women participating in different government development programme.
- Participation levels of women in political processes at the local and national levels.
- Change in female literacy levels- primary, secondary and adult literacy.

Education is a main key to empowering the women. Another powerful instrument of women is employment. If we educate women probability of getting employment opportunities will be high and which further leads to improvement in the social status.

Background of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Historically this scheme was proposed by the P.V. Narasihma Rao in 1991. Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005 seems to be a more advanced and better scheme which directly gives a right to employment. In our society, employment to rural population specially the weaker section of the society likes SCs and STs is needed. This scheme has been implemented all over the country in selected districts. In Haryana, the national rural employment guarantee scheme (NREGA) was launched by the Haryana government in all Gram Panchayat of the districts of Mahendergarh and Sirsa in February 2006 in the first phase. It gives 100 days guaranteed wage employment in a financial year. In 2006, it was finally approved in the parliament and was implemented in 200 districts of India in the first stage and 130 districts in the second stage. The 33% reservation for women was implemented in the 73rd amendment Act 1992 and 74th amendment Act 1992 which was passed on 24 April 1993 and 1 June 1993 respectively. These two Amendments are done under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi. The Panchayati Raj concept is premised on Mahatma Gandhi's concept of "Swarajya" which was brought about in the 73rd and 74th amendment. Women participation has increased day by day and it is giving them a sense of independence and security because economic empowerment leads to improvement in social perception against women. This scheme is very important for women empowerment. The cost sharing for financial assets shall be furnished by the central and state Government in the ratio of 90:10. The target group is priority that one third wage seekers are women and the gram Panchayat and block programme officer shall provide unskilled manual work to the candidate within fifteen days of receipt of application preferably within a radius of 5 km of the village, where the candidate resides. In case the employment is provided outside such a radius, it must be furnished within the block and the labourer shall be paid 10% extra wages for

transportation and other expenses. Under the scheme, the lowest wages of ₹277 per person-day notified by the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. Of India w.e.f. 1st April 2017 are being paid equal to men and women workers and the wages have increased to ₹281 (31 March 2018 by government of India) recently the wages have increased to ₹315 (20 March 2021 by government of India). The payment of wages is being completed via saving bank/post offices accounts of employees on weekly or fortnightly basis. Unemployment allowance shall be payable if employment is not provided within 15 days of the receipt submission. The rate of employment allowance shall be one-fourth of the wage rate for the first thirty days and not less than one half of the wage rate for the remaining period. 60:40 wage and material ratio to be maintained at district

level government. Contractors and use of machines are banned by the government.

About the study area

Mahendergarh was previously known as ‘Kanaud’ because of its association with Kanaudia group of Brahmans. During the middle of the nineteenth century, it came to be known as Mahendergarh. Mahendergarh district which lies between 27 ° 47 ' 50" N and 28° 28' 00" N latitude and between 75° 54'00"E and 76° 22' 11" E longitude. It has a geographical area of 1899.00 sq. km which comprises of 1866.02 sq. km of rural area and 32.98 sq. km of urban area. Mahendergarh district has a total of 370 villages. According to 2011 census, the total population of Mahendergarh district is 9,21,680 of which 4,86,553 is male and 4,35,127 women.

Table 1: General information about country

	India	Haryana	Mahendergarh
Population	1,21,05,69,573	25,351,462	9,21,680
Literacy rate	73%	75.55%	80.8%
Sex ratio (female per 1000males)	943	879	894.31

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Table 2: General information of Mahendergarh district

Important Statistics		
Total Population	Persons 922,088	Males- 486,665
		Females- 435,423
	Area (in sq. Km.)	1899
	Density of Population (Persons per sq. Km.)	486
Rural Population	Persons- 789,233	Males- 416,358
		Females- 372,875
Urban Population	Persons 132,855	Males- 70,307
		Females 62,548
	Percentage Urban Population	14.41
Sex Ratio (Number of females per 1000 males)	Total- 895	Rural- 896
		Urban- 890
Literates	Persons	630,255(77.72%)

	Males	380,440(89.72%)
	Females	249,815(64.57%)
Decadal Population Growth 2001-2011	Persons	109,567(13.48%)
	Males	63,087(14.89%)
	Females	46,480(11.95%)

Source: Census of India (2011)

In Haryana phase 1 district is Mahendergarh and Sirsa is better than of Sirsa it is 36.52%. However, in proportion to total rural BPL households, only 37.3% of rural BPL households have been provided employment compared to 60% in Sirsa. The MNREGA is implemented in the two districts. Mahendergarh was chosen for the said study because it has more BPL person. Mahendergarh is the most backward area of the country notified by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in 2006. Mahendergarh

most of the other districts. The coverage of rural households in Mahendergarh was 37.31% which is higher in the percentage of BPL population in the district, while in the case district has the participation of female in MNREGA, Sihma block recorded lowest participation 33.27% and Nangal Chaudhary block have highest participation 62.50%. For the present study we have taken Sihma and Nangal Chaudhary block to get a general idea about the Mahendergarh District under MNREGA scheme.

Table 3: Block wise Total female workers of MNREGA scheme Mahendergarh District (2017-18)

Block	Total	No. of Women	Percentage
ATELI NANGAL	977	380	38.89
KANINA	822	359	43.67
MAHENDRAGARH	1196	633	52.93
NANGAL CHAUDHRY	1120	700	62.50
NARNAUL	902	539	59.76
NIZAMPUR	957	530	55.38
SATNALI	538	315	58.55
SIHMA	505	168	33.27
Total	7017	3629	51.72

Source: Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

Objective of this study

1. To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s economic empowerment.
2. To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s social empowerment.
3. To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s political empowerment.

Research Methodology

The study intends to analyse the working of MNREGA in Mahendergarh district. Further, it intends to identify the role of MNREGA in the empowerment of women. Used Quantitative method,

Qualitative method, field survey method and simple random sampling for the study.

Space sample design

In the present study, the required data will be collected by the help of Taro Yomene formula of sample size $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$. N stands for Total Sample, e stands for margin of error. Since the research area consists of eight blocks, in this we have collected one developed block and one backward block. The sample to be collected in the Nangal Chaudhary block is 42 and in Sihma block is 36.

Space Data collection and tools used in study

For collecting data, social inquiry is adopted. The questionnaire consists of various questions from all spheres like personal data, i.e. names, sex, social, economically, educationally and empowerment related questions.

Data analysis

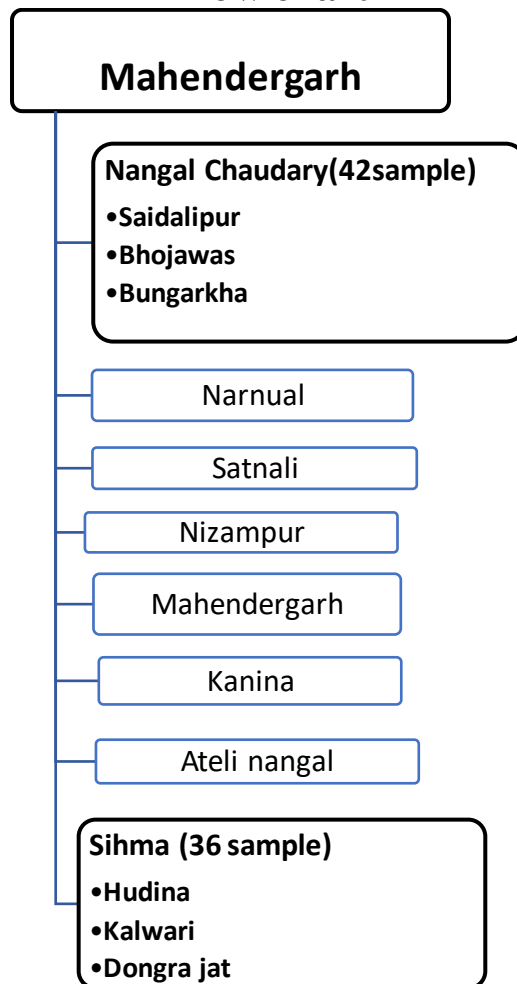
For our study, we collected the data as a primary source through filling the questionnaire. In section 1, we mentioned for the data collection in selected blocks. We are used the SPSS software to analyses the primary data. The results are mentioned in the tabular format on the basis of suitable variables.

Need, importance and scope of the study

The study has a broad scope in terms of understanding the nature organization and working of MNREGA and its role in understanding economic, social empowerment of women in Mahendergarh district. In this study we have made an attempt to study the socio-economic status of women in rural areas and poor household with the impact of MNREGA in the study areas. Therefore, the present

study has importance and scope to find out the role of MNREGA on women.

Flow chart



Motivation of the study

We were motivated to conduct this study from a personal experience in my hometown. The roads there are under constructions despite the work being done under the MNREGA and full machinery like JCB and tractors but very little workforce of 2-3 persons. The same issue was noticed in other villages. On checking the official web page of MNREGA. I saw that some complaints against this was lodged. Then on seeing the full yearly data I was able to deduce the real issue and think on the MNREGA. The male persons would go to another work station which

prompted me to find out the women’s status by MNREGA. .

Data analysis and interpretation

Maximum target group which works in MNREGA are 30 to 50 age group. Maximum workers belong to SC and have BPL cards. The target group can barely read or write their signature. Maximum respondents' family is controlled by the husband and other elder members (property is controlled by elder male members) but socially get equal respect as men.

Table 4: You Get Equal Respect as Men

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	59	75.6
No	19	24.4

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

All have an individual bank account for withdrawing their wages which was made compulsory for all MNREGA workers. Only a few respondents feel that there is unequal treatment before working with MNREGA. None of the workers feel insecure at the workplace because their family members and village people work with them but sometimes occasionally feel discriminated at workplace the worksite (some people use abusive language).

Table 5: Parameters of Discrimination Faced on Workplace

	Frequency	Percent
Sexual harassment	0	0
Caste	12	15.4
Gender	11	14.1
Age (relaxation)	19	24.4
No	36	46.2

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

Normally they feel safe in their village periphery. Majority of the respondents chose MNREGA for supporting their family and fulfilling their basic needs. Majority of women work all day for their house. The major share of respondents work more than 9 hours a day (but officially not adding their home chores). A major target group work in other activities before joining MNREGA and also work after leaving MNREGA because the 100-day work doesn’t fulfil their family needs. A major finding of the study officially says about the 100 days but this is not fulfilled in reality (All respondents are not working 100 days in MNREGA).

Table 6: Income before MNREGA

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 3000	8	10.3
3000-7000	63	80.8
7000 and above	7	9.0

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

Table 7: Income after MNREGA

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 3000	0	0
3000-7000	29	37.2
7000 and above	49	62.8

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

Comparison between the Table 6 & 7, results shows after working in MNREGA the income group is comparatively increased. Majority of the respondents earn more after getting involved with MNREGA.

Figure: 1

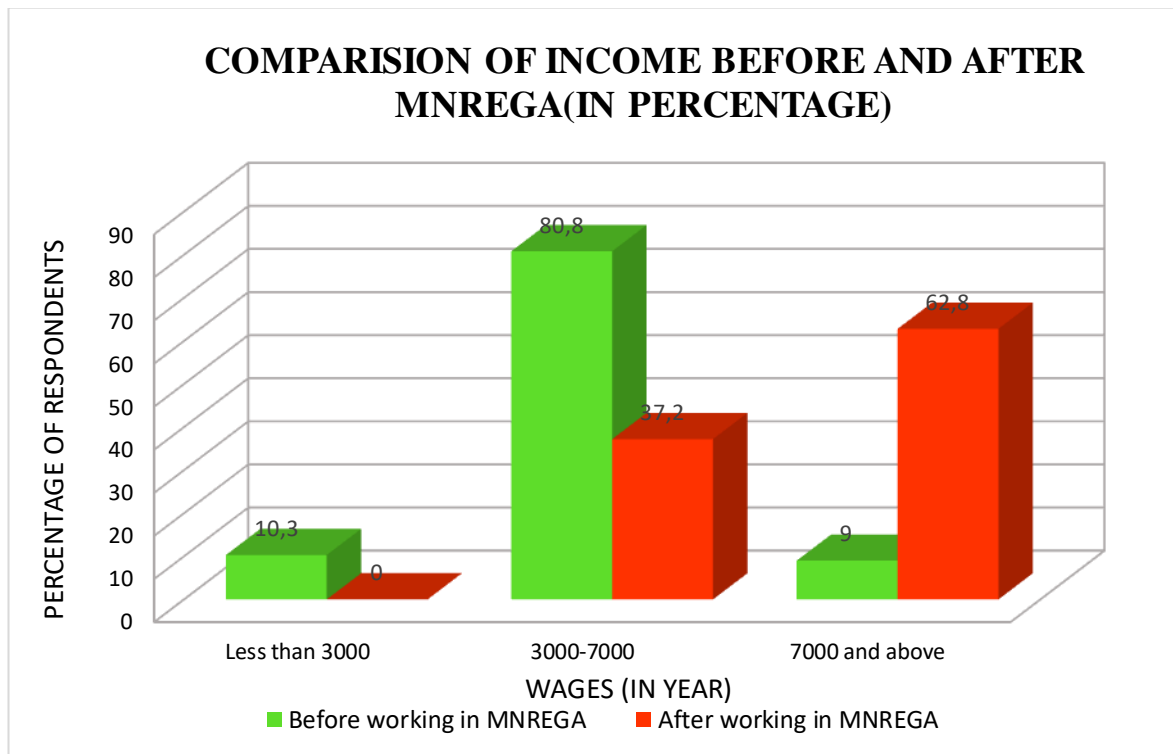


Table 8: Effects on Expenditure after Earning in MNREGA

	Frequency	Percent
Considerably increased	31	39.7
Not increased & remains same	47	60.3
Decreased	0	0

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

In Table 8 shows the status of the respondents says spend on the family nourishment and the family health care is considerably increased (31 respondents) and the 47 respondents says remains same because on the wages decided by the government is ₹281 that are low because

in this region the common wages given to worker is ₹450 but the merit of the MNREGA scheme which attracts is fixed work in a day, fixed wages to all workers, payment is directly transferred to the accounts and the work is organised when the crop cutting time is over and that's time is free for respondent.

Table 9: Any change in your Income after working in MNREGA

	Frequency	Percent
Considerably increased	51	65.4
Not increased & remains same	26	33.3
Decreased	1	1.3

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

Majority of the respondent's income increased after working in MNREGA.

Figure: 2

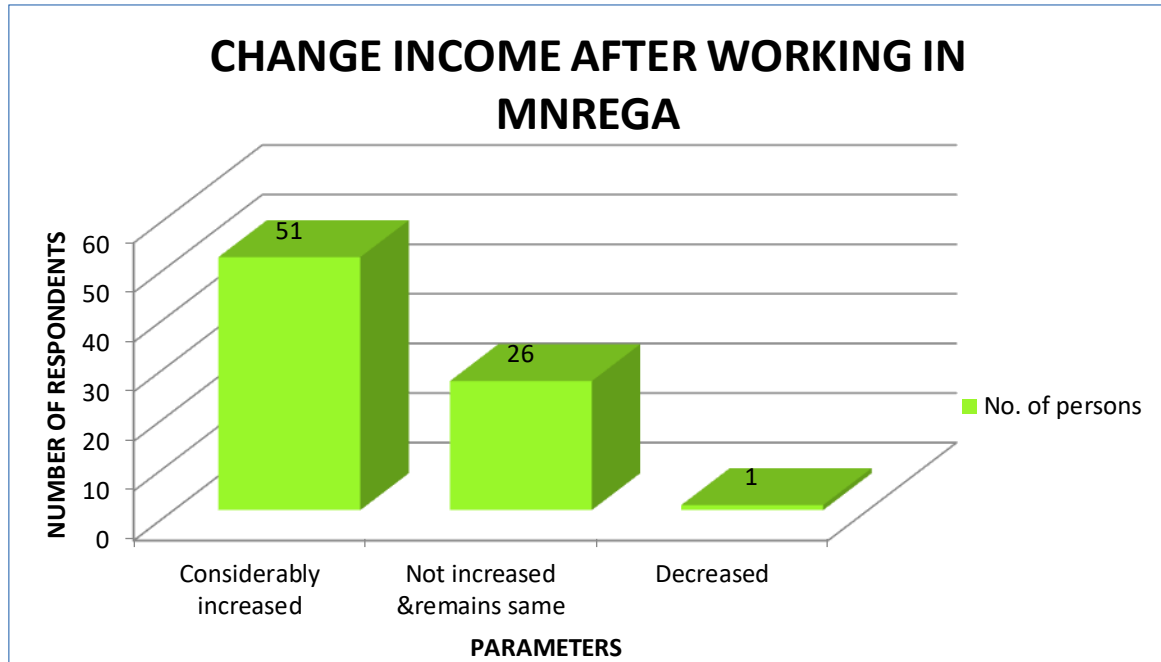


Table 10: Faced any difficulties in past working life

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	63	80.8
No	15	19.2

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

The Table 10 shows the status of the respondents facing any difficulties in their past working life. The majority says yes (63 respondents) they say after completing the day's work the owner does not provide them wages. Their wages are given on the next day instead of the same day and also less wages as the owner says that they work less and also that their children cry in between and they are wasting time by tending to them. However, the 15 respondents said that they did not face any problem during the last working days. Household needs are not fulfilled by wages because at the time prices of all the essential things are on the peak and they

are fulfilled when all person wages collected. Most of the money is spent by an elder or male members of the family because they are the ones who go for shopping as the markets are far off from the villages. Men are allowed to spend money when they need something because they are also sources of income.

Table 11: Various aspects which make women independent

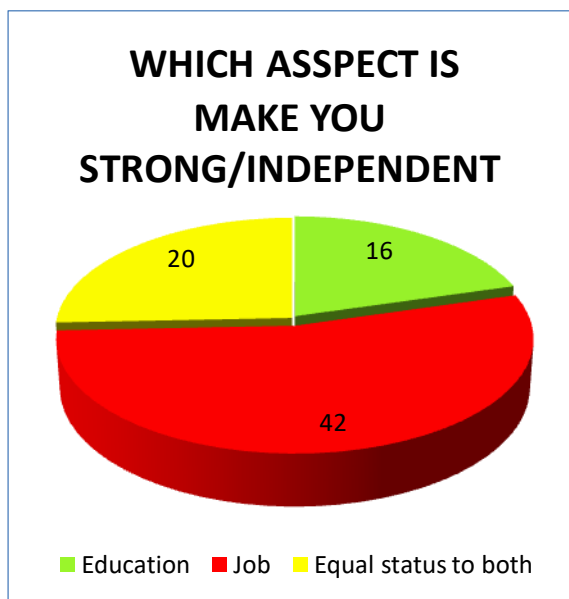
	Frequency	%
Education	16	20.5
Job	42	53.8
Equal status to both	20	25.6

Source: - Field survey, May 2018

The respondents' response job is a very important factor that makes women independent. The second factor is

education which makes women independent in life.

Figure: 3



All the respondent not received the 100 days job in MNREGA.

Table 12: Number of Working Days in a Year

	Frequency	%
less than	11	14.1

30		
30 to 50	22	28.2
more than 50	45	57.7

Source: Field survey, May 2018

Most respondents are not involved in politics and do not watch/ read political issues but 59% of respondents are attending the Gram Sabha meeting. Gram Sabha attending members are aware of the works in their village periphery.

Table 13: Voting rights before working in MNREGA

	Frequency	%
Community Level	4	5.1
Family	39	50.0
Relationship	34	43.6
Independent Level	1	1.3

Source: Field survey, May 2018

Table 14: Voting rights after working in MNREGA

	Frequency	%
Community Level	60	76.9
Family	10	12.8
Relationship	3	3.8
Independent Level	5	6.4

Source: Field survey, May 2018

Figure: 4

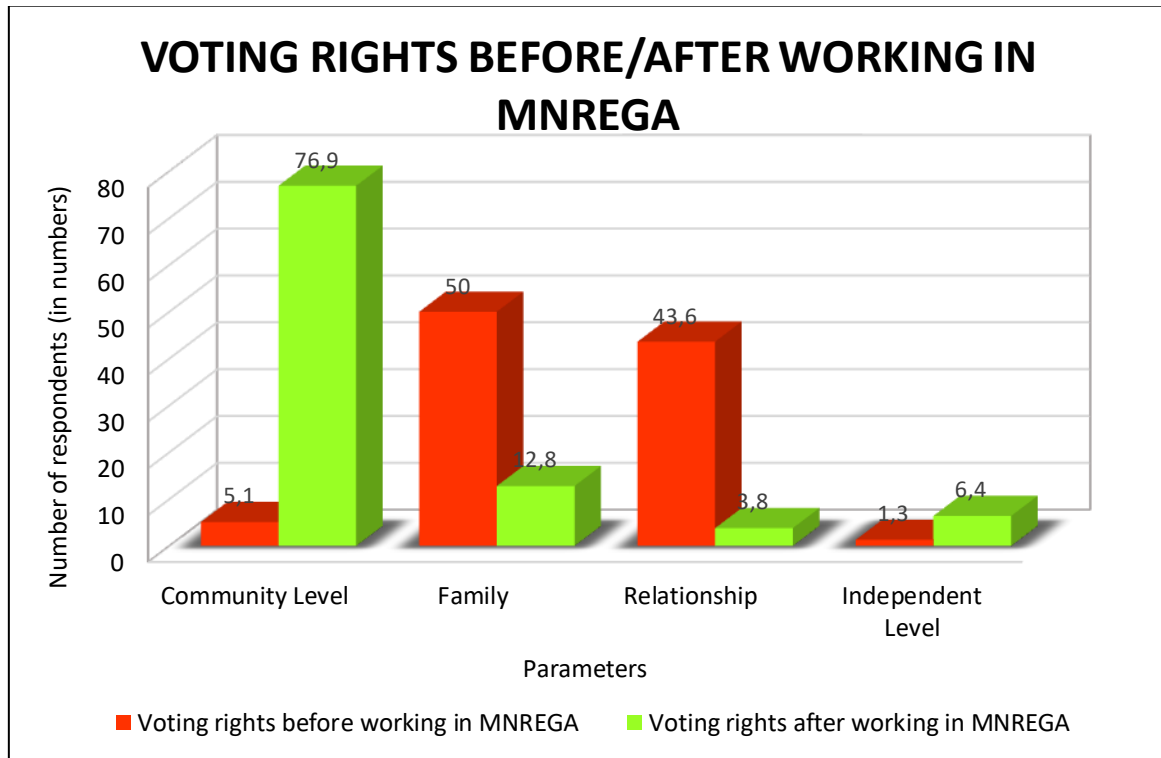


Figure 4 represents the status of voting rights before and after working in MNREGA. The respondents increase in community-level or independent level after working in MNREGA. Their opinion about family/relationships is decreasing after working in MNREGA.

Method

We are testing the equality of h independent multiple distribution. We are considering p_i the probability of an item being assigned to the i^{th} class, then this test is applicable if y_{ij} is the number of items occurring in the class associated with p_i .

Let $p_{ij} = P(A_i), i = 1, 2, \dots, k; j = 1, 2, \dots, h$. It is required to test

$$H_0 : p_{i1} = p_{i2} = p_{i3} = \dots = p_{ih} = p_i, i = 1, 2, \dots, k$$

Carry out the j^{th} experiment n_j times, making sure that the n_j instances are independent, and let $Y_{1j}, Y_{2j}, Y_{3j}, \dots, Y_{kj}$ denote the frequencies of the respective events $A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_k$. Then

$$Q = \sum_{j=1}^h \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{(Y_{ij} - n_j p_{ij})^2}{n_j p_{ij}}$$

Has an approximate χ^2 distribution with $(k-1)$ degrees of freedom. Under H_0 , we estimate $(k-1)$ probabilities from

$$\hat{p}_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^h Y_{ij}}{\sum_{j=1}^h n_j}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, k - 1$$

The estimate of p_k then follows from

$$\hat{p}_k = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} \hat{p}_i. \text{ Then}$$

$$Q = \sum_{j=1}^h \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{(Y_{ij} - n_j \hat{p}_{ij})^2}{n_j \hat{p}_{ij}}$$

has an approximate χ^2 distribution with $h(k-1) - (k-1) = (h-1)(k-1)$ degrees of freedom. (see, Azen et al. (2011))

Objective: 1

To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s social empowerment.

Let H_0 : There is equal chance that woman are treated unequally as opposed to men your our community/family before and after MNREGA.

H_1 : There is unequal chance that woman are treated unequally with man by your community/family before and after MNREGA. Now we have the chi-square table.

Table -15

	Occasionally	Sometimes Only
Before	8	7
After	6	8

The calculated value of Chi-square with 1 degree of freedom is 0.03699 with P- value is 0.8475 and tabulated value of Chi-square with 1 degree of freedom is 3.841459. Then the calculated value is less than the tabulated value. So, we do not reject the null hypothesis it means woman are equally treated to unequal with man by

your community/family before and after MNREGA.

Objective: 2

To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s economic empowerment.

Let H_0 : There is equal income before and after working in MNREGA.

H_1 : There is unequal income before and after working in MNREGA.

Now we have the chi-square table.

Table- 16

	<3000	3000-7000	7000<
Before	8	63	7
After	0	29	49

The calculated value of Chi-square with 2 degree of freedom is 52.065 with P- value is 4.945×10^{-12} and tabulated value of Chi-square with 2 degree of freedom is 5.991465. Then the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value. So, we reject the null hypothesis it means womens’ income before and after in MNREGA have changed.

Objective: 3

To investigate the impact of MNREGA on women’s political empowerment.

Let H_0 : There no significance difference between the nature of voting right before and after working in MNREGA.

H_1 : There is significance difference between the nature of voting right before and after working in MNREGA. Now we have the chi-square table.

Table-17

	Community level says	Family Says	Relationship Says	Independent Says
Before	4	39	34	1
After	60	10	3	5

The calculated value of Chi-square with 3 degree of freedom is 94.803 with P- value is 2.26×10^{-16} and tabulated value of Chi-square with 3 degree of freedom is 7.814728. Then the calculated value is greater than the tabulated value. So, we reject the null hypothesis it means that there is the significance difference between the nature of voting right after working in MNREGA. (All the data analysis done by using R software.)

CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a very good scheme as the respondents have answered that it gives them security, employment and the most important factor is it gives them employment in the village periphery only . The job is also makes women strong and independent. Employment is a fundamental pre assuming manifesto to raise per capita income and decrease the household poverty. Poor employment is one of the reasons for reducing the share of poverty in India because 68.84% (Census 2011) population live in rural areas. So, they also bring about development in rural areas by programs like MNREGA. There is little doubt that women are empowered by the MNREGA scheme because when there is a comparison of the status before and after MNREGA then the results are in favor but if the wages are equal to a local level no doubt, this scheme enhances a very good and bright result. The income of all the workers increases before working in MNREGA. As women start earning it is

seen that they gain more respect. All the respondents have a bank account which comes in handy when the need arises. The major group opines that they choose MNREGA as work because they can support their family. Majority of the respondents have no problem at workplace and this is the merit that attracts the women. Women are consulted when there is expenditure on needs or marriage-related programs. After working MNREGA women can take the decision on them self and in politics also, increasing the contribution in the community or independent level.

The main from the field survey shows that the 100 days is not achieved by the workers and it is a major drawback. The respondent also says the wages are low, decided by the government because the local prices are high in comparison to the MNREGA decided wages. Some villages have a very critical position because in these villages the sarpanch do the MNREGA work through the help of machines and show that this work is done by the labor and after some a logic system undertaken by the government, it gives wages to the workers but then the authority also make a solution of this by the workers give 500-1000 rupees for transaction to the bank and all the wages are given to the hands of sarpanch and villages authority. The system is very bad because the government aims to develop the village and the poor unskilled persons by this system but it's the opposite. In the samples, only a few samples had the striking of their name in the MNREGA register because they complaint to the district level regarding the aforementioned lacunaes. All the samples are collected from the MNREGA workers who work in the two blocks. After the sarpanch mentions that some of the workers are not working properly then the authority strikes off their name from the register. So, the authority does not give them wages. A few samples were also found who benefitted from the unemployment allowance

because this scheme gives work in 15 days of receipt submission. The extra wages are given when working outside the village at a distance of 5 km on real ground, no one benefits from this because the work is as it is given within a radius of 5 km.

But the few initiatives are taken by the government to check the work by GIS (GEOMNREGA) through the 3 pictures system captured by the block officers. The 7 registers are maintained by the block level to sort out the problem timely. Now the World Bank has also introduced a new innovative plan to reduce climate change. They say that we plan a region-wise development like flood controlling, cyclone controlling, drought proofing and grow more plants for a green earth.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Increase the wages because the wages are low in comparison to the local wages rates.
2. For reduction in disparity a local level officers needs to be appointed because respondents have a common problem of nepotism or redtapisim by the sarpanch/local bodies in the MNREGA.
3. Some villages do not do work in reality. It is important that these village are located and the fund from MNREGA needs to be curtailed and take strict action should be taken.
4. Local level awareness is also important because it empowers the persons about the scheme.
5. NGO and social welfare authority need to be involved in the MNREGA.
6. Routine check are important to see how much welfare are done though this scheme.

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