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CONTENTS

| Sr. No. | TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S) | Page No. |
|---------|---|----------|
| 1. | PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS OF VALUE ADDED STATEMENT OF VISAKHAPATNAM PORT TRUST <i>ARUNA POLISETTY & SHEELA.P</i> | 1 |
| 2. | A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS SAKTHI MILK WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY <i>M. DEVARAJAN & S. KIRTHIKA</i> | 8 |
| 3. | EMPOWERING HEALTH SECTOR THROUGH DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVES <i>CHINNASAMY. V</i> | 10 |
| 4. | COACHING: TRY FEEDFORWARD INSTEAD FEEDBACK FOR LEADERSHIP PERFORMANCE <i>C. NIKHILA REDDY, JYOTI ADHIKARI & DR. RAVINDER KAUR</i> | 14 |
| 5. | ROLE OF LOGISTICS IN BUILDING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION <i>DR. S. SUDHA</i> | 17 |
| 6. | INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ENABLED SERVICES IN PROMOTING SERVICES MARKETING <i>GUDDATI ARCHANA</i> | 20 |
| 7. | INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE & BRAND BUILDING <i>K. SRIKANTH & DR. SAPNA SINGH</i> | 22 |
| 8. | A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON EMOTIONAL STABILITY AND WORK LIFE BALANCE OF EMPLOYEES OF TEXTILE INDUSTRY IN MADHYA PRADESH <i>NEHA SOMANI & DR. SANDEEP MALU</i> | 26 |
| 9. | A STUDY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON INTERNET BANKING SERVICES: AN EVALUATION <i>DR. J. RAMOLA PREMALATHA & V. BHARATHKUMAR</i> | 29 |
| 10. | THE ROLE OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN THE IRAQI ECONOMY <i>HIKMAT SALMAN KHUDHAIR</i> | 33 |
| 11. | FOOD SECURITY IN IGAD COUNTRIES: UNFINISHED AGENDA OR UNATTAINABLE GOAL? <i>MELAKE TEWOLDE</i> | 39 |
| 12. | CASH CONVERSION CYCLE AND FIRM PROFITABILITY IN CEMENT MANUFACTURING SECTOR IN TELANGANA STATE-INDIA <i>P LAKSHMI NARASA REDDY</i> | 47 |
| 13. | THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE <i>SREEJA NAIR</i> | 50 |
| 14. | PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH STUDENTS' PERSISTENCE IN BUSINESS APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING CENTRES (BATCs): IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA <i>IBRAHIM SHITTU KAILANI</i> | 53 |
| 15. | THE CAUSES OF PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES' OVERDUES IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A STUDY OF WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT <i>DR. K. SUDHAKARA RAO</i> | 63 |
| 16. | U-COMMERCE OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES <i>SREEJA.E.S</i> | 68 |
| 17. | ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF OLD AGE HOMES IN INDIA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MYSURU CITY IN KARNATAKA <i>DIVYA M & VIDYA D AVADHANI</i> | 71 |
| 18. | A STUDY ON CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION ON MOBILE BANKING IN INDIA <i>AMALKUMAR.P</i> | 76 |
| 19. | A CASE STUDY REGARDING NOT USING CREDIT CARD BY PEOPLE OF TINSUKIA DISTRICT <i>DR. NARENDRA KUMAR</i> | 79 |
| 20. | IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN: A STUDY OF MANDI DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH <i>KHEM RAJ</i> | 85 |
| | REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK & DISCLAIMER | 88 |

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IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN: A STUDY OF MANDI DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Intended for the effectual implementation of the MGNREGA, awareness among the target group is very important. Until and unless the target group understands the real approach of the scheme, one cannot think in context of their full participation and involvement. Since, the MGNREGA is fundamentally demand-driven the status of awareness among the rural people assumes greater significance in unleashing a wave of transformation in the lives of beneficiaries. Hence, it is significant that proper acquaintance and awareness should be generated among the rural poor with regard to MGNREGA to ensure their full participation and involvement in the programme.

KEYWORDS

MGNREGA, rural women social impact, unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is a core cause of poverty. The Government has launched a variety of schemes for the eradication of poverty. Among these programmes, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is the largest rural employment programme ever undertaken in India. The Government as a commitment to its National Common Minimum Programme, has successfully passed the Bill on MGNREGA. The launching of MGNREGA is a memorable endeavour to make certain employment to rural needy and poor households. MGNREGA is a holistic measure Rights that is Right to Employment at least to one member of the family.¹ MGNREGA guarantees the right to work for 100 days in every financial year for every rural household for manual work. The major objective of MGNREGA is the creation of durable assets and strengthening the livelihood resource base of the rural poor for fighting poverty. For receiving work under MGNREGA, the villagers have to apply to the Gram Panchayat for registration. Gram Panchayat issues a job card within 15 days after the villager's registration. After having undertaken the work, the villagers are supposed to get cash amount for the work done every week. Under the MGNREGA, men and women are given equal minimum wages and Gram Sabha selects the types of rural works such as watershed, plantation, rural connectivity, land-leveling, soil conservation, etc. Gram Panchayats are given more significance than Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishad for the implementation of MGNREGA. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Government has made a provision of 'Social Audit' under this scheme. Under the MGNREGA, the tool of Social Audit is extensively used by local community to ascertain the relevance, usefulness and utility of the funds allocated. The Gram Sabha under social Audit scrutinizes the standard, quality and performance of rural development initiatives. The formulation and implementation of MGNREGA constitutes a significant step to poverty alleviation by providing an institutional framework for guaranteeing supplementary livelihood opportunity to the rural households.² Hence, it is imperative to evaluate real position of the impact and implementation of MGNREGA in district Mandi of Himachal Pradesh. Four blocks namely Balh, Drang, Gohar and Sundernagar of Mandi district and a sample of 318 women respondents has been selected to know the economic, social and political impact of MGNREGA on rural women.

RESPONSES REGARDING ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN

To analyze the impact of MGNREGA on rural women, here, an attempt has been made to analyze the social, political and economic impact of MGNREGA on rural women under the study area. In this context, the data has been collected from the sample programme beneficiaries by rendering three statements i.e. 'MGNREGA' helps in improving income of rural women', 'It helps in making women self-dependent' and 'It helps in improving women's say in family's economic matters'. The opinion in this context has been illustrated in table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1: ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

| Sr. No. | Statement | Responses | | | |
|---------|---|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | | To a large extent | To a marginal extent | Not at all | Total |
| 1 | Providing income to rural women | 67 (21.06) | 188 (59.11) | 63 (19.81) | 318 (100.00) |
| 2 | Making women self-dependent | 54 (16.98) | 182 (57.23) | 82 (25.78) | 318 (100.00) |
| 3 | Improving women's say in family's economic matter | 61 (19.18) | 203 (63.83) | 94 (29.55) | 318 (100.00) |

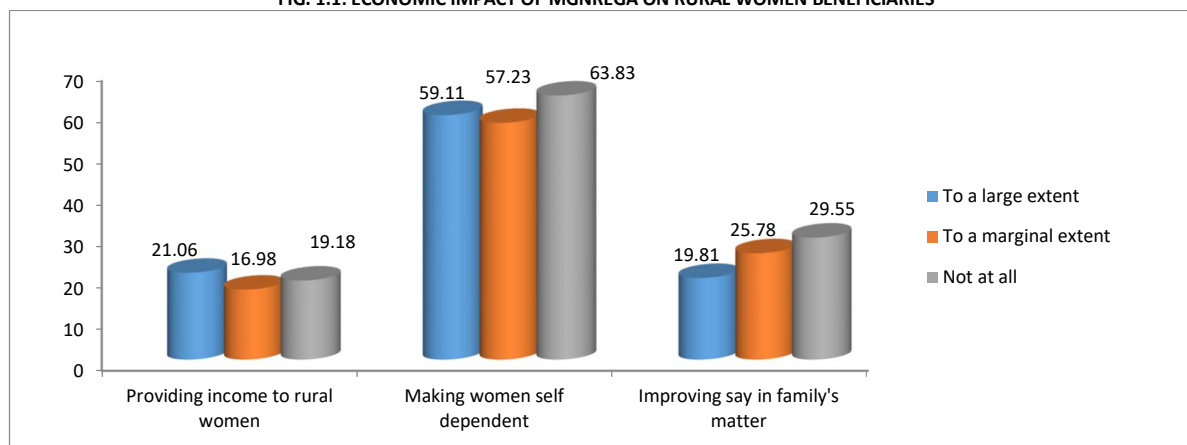
FIG. 1.1: ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

Table 1.1 illustrated that, 21.06 per cent of sample respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is providing income to rural women 'up to a large extent', 59.11 per cent of respondents recognized it 'upto a marginal extent' and 19.81 per cent of respondents stated that, it is not providing income to rural women. However, with regards to the second statement, 16.98 per cent of respondents recognized that, MGNREGA is making women self-dependent 'upto a large extent', 57.23 per cent were of the views that, it is making women self-dependent 'upto a marginal extent' and 25.78 per cent of sample respondents reported that, MGNREGA is not making rural women self-dependent.

In context of third statement, 19.18 per cent of sample respondents held the views that, MGNREGA is improving women's say in the family's economic matters 'up to a large extent', whereas, 63.83 per cent of respondents recognized it 'upto a marginal extent' and 29.55 per cent were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not improving women's say in family's economic matters.

The analysis of above data leads to the conclusion that, the impact of MGNREGA on the 'women's self dependency' and 'having say' in the family's economic matters was found marginal in overall.

OPINION REGARDING SOCIAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN

To analyze the social impact of MGNREGA on rural women, it has been ascertained on five statements, such as, 'Improving women's social status', 'Improving say in social matters', 'Transforming towards modernization', 'Helps in leaving conservative mores' and 'Inculcating a feeling of equality and self-identity'. The data with regard to the social impact of MGNREGA on rural women beneficiaries has been obtained and reflected in table 1.2.

TABLE 1.2: SOCIAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

| Sr. No. | Statement | Responses | | | |
|---------|---|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | | To a large extent | To a marginal extent | Not at all | Total |
| 1 | Improving Social Status | 59 (18.55) | 197 (61.94) | 62 (19.49) | 318 (100.00) |
| 2 | Improving say in social matters | 48 (15.09) | 172 (54.08) | 98 (30.81) | 318 (100.00) |
| 3 | Transforming towards modernization | 51 (16.03) | 185 (58.17) | 82 (25.78) | 318 (100.00) |
| 4 | Helps in leaving conservative mores | 96 (30.18) | 186 (58.49) | 36 (11.32) | 318 (100.00) |
| 5 | Inculcating a feeling of equality and self-identity | 76 (23.89) | 186 (58.49) | 56 (17.61) | 318 (100.00) |

FIG. 1.2: SOCIAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

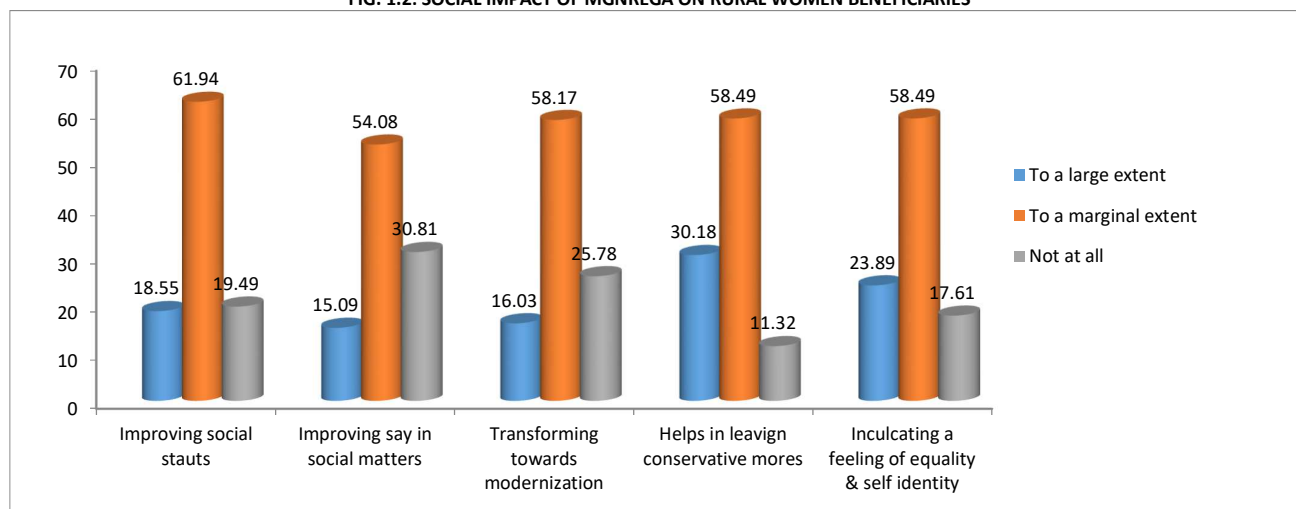


Table 1.2 indicates that, 18.55 per cent of sample programme beneficiaries recognized with regard to the first statement that, MGNREGA is improving social status of rural women 'upto a large extent', 61.94 per cent of respondents reported it 'upto a marginal extent', whereas 19.49 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not improving the social status of rural women. In respect of second statement, 15.09 per cent of respondents were of the views that, MGNREGA is improving women's say in social matters 'upto a large extent', 54.08 per cent responded regarding this 'up to a marginal extent' and 30.81 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not improving women's say in social matters. With regard to the third statement, 16.03 per cent of sample respondents generalized that, MGNREGA is transforming the women towards modernization 'up to a large extent', 58.17 per cent were of the opinion 'up to a marginal extent', however 25.78 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not transforming women towards modernization.

In context of fourth statement, 30.18 per cent of respondents recognized that, MGNREGA is helping to rural women in living conservative mores, 'upto a large context', 58.49 per cent of respondents reported it 'upto a marginal extent', however 11.32 per cent of respondents held the opinion that, MGNREGA is not helping in leaving conservative mores. In addition to the fifth statement, 23.89 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA inculcates a feeling of equality and self identity 'upto a large extent', whereas, 58.49 per cent of respondents rendered their majority to the second option i.e. 'upto a marginal extent', however, 17.61 per cent of respondents recognized that, MGNREGA is not inculcating a feeling of equality and self identity. On the basis of above analysis, it can be inferred that, the social condition of rural women has improved up to a marginal extent. They are now participating community's social matters. MGNREGA also helped in bringing some equality and identity to women in rural areas.

OPINION REGARDING POLITICAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

Here, an attempt has been made to know the inner state of women beneficiaries regarding the political impact of MGNREGA on rural women. To ascertain the political impact of MGNREGA on rural women, five statements have been described such as, 'Role in panchayat's policy making process', 'Activating to participate in Gram Sabha meetings', 'Confidence to speak in Gram Sabha', 'Interaction with the official and representation in various committees. Data in this respect has been obtained from rural women beneficiaries. The data so collected has been demonstrated in table 1.3.

TABLE 1.3: OPINION REGARDING POLITICAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

| Sr. No. | Statement | Responses | | | |
|---------|---|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | | To a large extent | To a marginal extent | Not at all | Total |
| 1 | Role in Panchayat's policy making | 34 (10.69) | 158 (49.68) | 126 (39.62) | 318 (100.00) |
| 2 | Activating to participate in gram sabha meeting | 49 (15.40) | 154 (48.42) | 115 (36.16) | 318 (100.00) |
| 3 | Confidence to speak in Gram Sabha | 38 (11.94) | 146 (45.91) | 134 (42.13) | 318 (100.00) |
| 4 | Interaction with the officials | 51 (16.03) | 165 (51.88) | 102 (32.07) | 318 (100.00) |
| 5 | Representation in various committees | 114 (35.84) | 100 (31.44) | 104 (32.70) | 318 (100.00) |

FIG. 1.3: OPINION REGARDING POLITICAL IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL WOMEN BENEFICIARIES

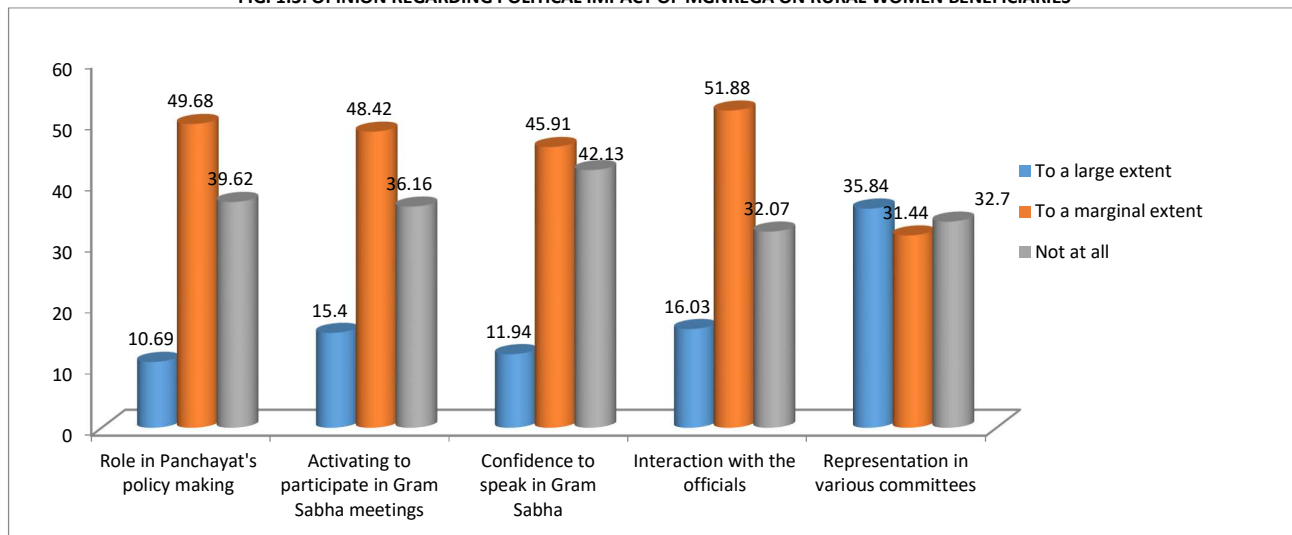


Table 1.3 reveals that, out of total sample respondents, 10.69 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA provided opportunity to rural women to represent their role in Panchayat's policy making process 'up to a large extent' whereas, 49.68 per cent of respondents recognized with regard to the first statement 'up to a marginal extent', however, 39.62 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not providing opportunity to rural women to represent their role in Panchayat's policy making process.

In context of second statement, 15.40 per cent of sample respondents held the views that, MGNREGA is activating the rural women to participate in Gram Sabha meetings 'upto a large extent', whereas, 48.42 per cent recognized it 'up to a marginal extent', 36.16 were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not activating the rural women to participate in Gram Sabha meeting. With regard to the third statement, 11.94 per cent of respondents were agreed with this statement that, MGNREGA built the confidence level of rural women to speak in Gram Shaba 'upto a large extent', whereas, 45.91 per cent of respondents recognized it 'upto a marginal extent' and 42.13 per cent of respondents reported that, MGNREGA did not built the confidence of rural women to speak in Gram Sabha. In addition to the fourth statement, 16.03 per cent of respondents held the views that, MGNREGA create interaction of rural women towards the officials 'upto a large extent', whereas, 51.88 per cent of respondents were agreed 'upto a marginal extent' and 32.07 per cent were of the opinion that, MGNREGA did not create any interaction of rural women toward the officials.

In addition to the fifth statement, 35.84 per cent of the respondents held the views that, MGNREGA provides opportunity to rural women to represent their self in various committees 'up to a large extent', whereas, 31.44 per cent of the respondents were agreed regarding the fifth statement 'upto a marginal extent' and 32.70 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that, MGNREGA is not providing opportunity to rural women to represent their role in various committees. From the above analysis, it can be inferred that, MGNREGA has empowered the rural women politically to a marginal extent except, their representation in various committees of Gram Sabha at Panchayat level. Further, MGNREGA provide opportunity to represent them in various committees formed under MGNREGA to a large extent.

CONCLUSION

Despite all this, rural households have to work under the MGNREGA because it provides employment at the door step. However, there were no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, age, gender and family status while rendering the employment under the MGNREGA. However, the prescribed provisions of MGNREGA were not found sufficient. Further, it was also observed that, this programme has marginally helped to the beneficiaries to improve their economic and social conditions in the rural areas. MGNREGA has successfully providing at least some level of employment opportunities and enhance the income of the rural women. MGNREGA was also providing platform to rural women by putting purchasing power in their hands and thereby rendering them marginal control over family's expenditure.

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