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IMPACT OF MGNREGA PROGRAMME ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL KERALA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 was brought by central Govt. in 2006 for achieving some goal such as eradicating rural poverty, women empowerment and creation some social assets. The act aims at strengthening women employment by enforcing that about 1/3 of total work force should be women and also there is equal wage for men and women. In Kerala women participation, make this programs a great success. Hence, this study aims at analysing how this scheme is benefited for women empowerment in Anthikad panchayath in Thrissur district in Kerala. From the study it is found that this scheme playing a significant role in creating employment opportunities for women in the panchayath and help to increase the income and expenditure of households. The scheme significantly enhance the socio- economic decision making power to women in the man dominated rural society and also giving more self-respect among women.

KEYWORDS

women empowerment, financial autonomy, self-confidence, freedom to travel, freedom to speak.

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INTRODUCTION

Women constitute around 70% of total Population in India. But their living condition is very poor. Every time women's are treated as poorest people just because of gender inequality. The discrimination against women is increasing day by day. Poverty, illiteracy poor financial background, low standard of living etc make women's condition more worse. To eliminate such evils from society empowering women is most necessary. Empowered women contribute more to the society. By getting better educational facilities and opportunity to do better employment, help them to improve their position in the society.

In 2005, Central Government introduced MGNREG Scheme to ensure 100 days guaranteed employment to poorest people especially women's to uplift them from utter Poverty and improve their Standard of living. MGNREG is a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India. Through its impact on social Protection, live hood Security empowerment of women. It is the one of the largest employment generation scheme of India govt. Through the Study the researcher Analysis, how this scheme is beneficial for empowerment of rural women's in Kerala.

MGNREGA

MGNREGA is an Indian labour and social security measure introduced by central Govt in 2005 with the aim of enhancing the live hood security of rural poor by giving them better guaranteed employment opportunity. The act was 1st Proposed in 1991 by P.V. Narasimhan Rao. In 2006 it was finally accepted in parliament and from 1st April 2008 onwards the act was implemented in all state in India. Apart from creating economic security to rural people, it help in creating rural assets (such as roads, canals, ponds etc.) and also helps in protecting environment, empowering rural women's etc. This programme is very effective for empowering women and development of rural India.

NEED OF MGNREGA

This scheme is beneficial for us because of following:

- ✓ To act as media for socio- economic development.
- ✓ Provide unskilled work for rural India in the rural area.
- ✓ Ensuring Sustainable development by developing the natural resources.
- ✓ Providing an important role to Panchayath Raj.
- ✓ Social protection for most vulnerable people living in rural India by providing employment opportunities.
- ✓ Live hood Securities for poor through creation of durable assets, improved water security, soil conservation and higher land productivity.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the Major Problem faced by our country is unemployment and poverty. To improve the living Condition of poor people in India, there are lots of employment generation scheme were introduced by various Central and State Government at various Period in India. But most of the schemes are not much effective to reduce poverty among rural poor. In 2006, Union Govt introduced MGNREGA programme. It is one of the largest employment generation programme of India Govt. Now it is also considered as the largest women empowerment project in India. The main aim of these programme is that, through generating employment opportunity uplift the rural poor especially women's. Through this scheme Government ensure 100 days granted employment to every adult who are willing to the take unskilled manual job in every family in a financial year. This Program is very attractive among women's because this scheme stipulate that one third of total workers should be women.

In this context, the present study analyses how this programme is effective for women empowerment. The present study conducted among MGNREGA women workers in Anthikkad panchayath, it is a coastal panchayath in Thrissur district. In the panchayath most of the women's have only primary education. In this circumstance to earn their own earnings is possible only through unskilled manual work. Here MGNREGA is a blessed programme to the rural women to improve their earning capacity, decision making power etc. In anthikad panchayath out of total registered MGNREGA workers women constituted the major part, so the present study analyze the growth of women participation in this scheme and also analyse how this scheme is beneficial for socio-economic upliftment of rural women in the Panchayath.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyses the Socio- economic profile of MGNREGA workers.
2. To know the extent to which this scheme is successful in achieving women empowerment in Anthikad Panchayath.
3. To identify the various problem faced by MGNREG workers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Women population is a round half of the total population of India, however the condition of this half is very pathetic. Women's are subjected to gender discrimination on the basis of access to education, health, and employment and abuse of various kind of domestic violence.

Development of a state depends upon the empowerment of backward population category i.e. women. The real empowerment should begin from rural area were the most of the population resides. Rural women's are powerless to worker outside their home because of family restriction, Social and traditional barriers etc. Therefore their potential often remains underutilized. Urban women get a variety of employment opportunities to improve their earning capacity. But rural women get lessor opportunity. In such a situation the scheme like MGNREGA is a blessing one to improve the standard of living of rural poor and giving them more financial independency and autonomy in decision making etc. The present study analyses how this scheme is beneficial for empowering women's in Anthikkad panchayath in Thrissur district in Kerala.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study analyses the extent to which MGNREG is successful in achieving women empowerment. Geographically the study limited to Antikkad panchayath in Thrissur District in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY**SAMPLING DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The research design used in the study is description in nature. By using convenient sampling method 50 MGNREG workers are selected from Anthikkad Panchayath in Thrissur district in Kerala. The data is mainly collected from Primary sources. Structured questionnaire are distributed among the workers to collect primary data. Secondary data was collected from various source like books, journals, website etc.

TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

Simple Percentage analysis and rank test are applied for analyzing the data.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Soumya Mohanty (2012) in her study on "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Tribal Livelihoods: A case study in Sundargarh district of Odisha". The study concluded that MGNREGA is considered as a "Silver Bullet" for eradicating rural poverty and unemployment, by way of generating demand for productive labour force in villages. It provides an alternative source of livelihood which will have an impact on reducing migration, restricting child labour, alleviating poverty and making villages self-sustaining through productive assets creation such as road construction, work etc for which it has been considered as the largest antipoverty programme in Sundargarh district.

Dr G Xavier, G. Mari (2014) in his study on "impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment with special reference to Kalakkanmol panchayat in Sivagangai district, Tamil Nadu". The study analyse the impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic empowerment of women in Kalakkanmoi panchayat of Sivaganga district, Tamil Nadu. Through the present study researcher also analyse the various risk associated with the women during the working time of MGNREGA. The study finds that the MGNREGA programme help to increases the income and expenditure of the households and the scheme significantly enhances the social and economic decision making power to women in the men dominated rural society. Hence, the scheme ensures improved standard of living of the vulnerable poor, more specifically among women. The major problem faced by the are poor worksite facility, hot climate condition and reduction of leisure time etc. increase the work burden of workers during the working hours of MGNREGA.

Gowhar Bashir Ahangar (2014) in his article titled "women empowerment through MGNREG: A case study of block Shahabad of district Anantnag, Jammu & Kashmir. The findings of the study shows that through this programme women's are benefited most as worker, than as community. They take this opportunities to speak out and freedom from their routine family activates so empowerment of women has emerged as a unintended consequence of MGNREGA. Payment of wage through bank help the workers to increase their deposits in bank, which help the bank in financial inclusion process and equal wage for men and women, help to keep gender quality in the society. Old people and widows are more benefited of this scheme.

Midhula Mohank & Hemalatha A.V (2016) Through their study "MGNREGA - An Analytical Study" through the study researchers closely examined the significance of the scheme in empowering women from various aspects and also try to find out the success of the scheme. They make a critical analysis on the scheme, that though the scheme provides various opportunities to women, but it is doubt whether the social status and welfare of women have been improved much. The study reveals the real situation of women who enjoyed the benefit under MGNREG Scheme.

Shammim Ahmed, Mohammed Jamshed (2017) through their article titled "Women Empowerment through MGNREG An Empirical study of Haryana ", discuss the need and importance for the empowerment of women in the country and also discuss the emerging issues and challenges faced by the women especially the rural women. at the end of the study the researcher conclude that implementation of MGNREGA as a support system to the rural women through facilitating the essential process of entrepreneurship, capacity building, education, health and hygiene etc. This scheme is very helpful for rural India, for achievement of inclusive growth. The researchers point out that the overall development of a nation is highly dependent on the gender equality and the prosperity of back ward population i.e. women. The paper also analyse the potential of MGNREG scheme and its role in improving performance of women's in Haryana.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

TABLE 1: SOCIO- ECONOMIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
Marital status		
Married	36	72
Un married	8	16
Widow	6	12
Age Group		
21-30	6	12
31-40	17	34
41-50	20	40
51and above	7	14
Educational Qualification		
Primary	27	54
SSLC	19	38
+2/PDC	2	4
Others	2	4
Income Level		
Below 5000	4	8
5000-10000	28	56
10000-15000	8	16
15000-20000	7	14
Above 20000	4	8
Type of family		
Nuclear family	38	76
Joint Family	12	24

Demographic features of respondents

- The Above table shows that 72 % of the respondents are married, 16% are un married and 12% are windows. This shows that through MGNREG programme workers get additional income to their family along with their spouse.
- 40% of the female workers engaged with this scheme is belong to the age group of 41-50 Yrs, 34% belongs to 31-40 Yrs, 14% belongs to 51 Yrs and above. All this shows that even old age women's prefer this work with happy due to possibility of doing less risky job and the work is also available nearest to their home without much time stipulation.
- Among the respondents majority have less educational qualification, 54% have only Primary education, 38% are SSLC holders, 4% belong to other vocational schemes. Due to lower educational qualification it is difficult for them to find out other alternative Jobs.
- 80% of the respondents are BPL card holders this shows the incidence of poverty is high the Panchayath.

Family income

56% of them have family income between 1000-15000, 16% have family income between 10000-15000 and 8% have income below 5000. 78% opines that their family income is increased after joining this scheme. 12% have the opinion that this work does not help them much for improving their financial condition because their income just match with their expenditure.

Work experience

50% of the respondents have only 1-3 years of experience, 27% have 3-7 years of experience, only 7% have expenditure less than one year.

Type of savings hold

Payment of wage through bank help the workers to increase their deposits in the bank. 68% have savings account, 32% have no savings account because their income just match with their expenditure, so they have no excess income for savings. Due to getting regular income through this programme many of the respondents opt various savings and investment scheme. 25% have fixed deposits in bank, 18% have deposit in gold, 40% have various health insurance scheme, 15% have recurring deposit account in post office investment in Chit ties.

Expenditure pattern

The Expenditure pattern of the respondents are analysed by using ranking method. It shows that their major expenditure is for food and households and then followed by medical expenditure, repayment of bank loan, and to meet various educational expenditure of their children's.

Periodicity of Wage

Majority of respondents, 80% of them are getting wage monthly. Only 20% are receive wage weekly. All are getting wage through bank account this shows that this programs is very helpful for financial inclusion development in the Panchayath.

Family Support

Support from family is very important for women to perform better in their field, 83% have get good family support to do this work 17% of them does not get much support from their family.

TABLE 2: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT FACTORS

	Highly improved		Improved		Not Improved	
	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%	No. of Respondents	%
Autonomy in domestic & Financial decision making	24	48	20	40	6	12
Self confidence	15	30	25	50	10	20
Ability to deal with banking transitions	28	56	16	32	6	12
Freedom to Travel	15	30	27	54	8	16
Participation in panchayath Raj activities	29	58	12	24	24	18
Group thinking	10	20	14	28	28	52
Financial Position	12	24	25	50	50	26
Leadership quality at work site	8	16	12	24	24	60
Participation in political activities	5	10	7	14	14	76

Source: Primary Data

Women empowerment factors

From the above table it is clear that MGNREG workers are empowered through this scheme in various ways such as 48% are highly improved to taking various domestic and financial decisions. 40% acquired self-confidence to speak out after joining this scheme. Earning capacity of the workers are increased through this scheme. 56% of them opines that this scheme help them highly to improve their ability to deal with banking transitions and likewise leadership quality, group thinking and ability to participate in political activity etc. are less improved through this Scheme.

TABLE 3: SATISFACTION TOWARDS WORKSITE FACILITIES

	H.S		S		N		D.S		H.DS	
Allotment of work	14	28	17	34	20	38	-	-	-	-
Grievance redressal	10	20	17	35	8	15	9	18	6	12
Transparency in policy and programme	29	57	16	33	3	7	2	3	-	-
Cooperation with functionaries	22	43	24	47	2	3	2	7	-	-
Regularity in wage payment	15	30	10	20	8	16	12	24	5	10
Formality to Join the Scheme	42	84	5	10	3	6	-	-	-	-
Work site facilities	5	10	25	50	5	10	15	30	-	-
Training programme	4	7	30	60	16	20	6	13	-	-

Source: primary data

(HS=Highly satisfied=Satisfied-N=Neutral, DS= Dissatisfied, H.DS-Highly dissatisfied,)

From the above it is found that respondents are dissatisfied with delay in payment of wage, work site facilities, delay in allotment of work etc. They are satisfied with formality to join this scheme, transparency of policy and programme and cooperation from functionaries for the smooth conduct of this programme.

SUGGESTIONS

- Social audit on MGNREGA should strength to improve the working condition of workers and effective use of working days and resources.
- Fast job registration process, speedy issuing of job card, avoiding delay in getting wages etc. improve this scheme in future.
- Through massive advertisement programme panchayath authorities should create awareness among rural poor about this scheme.
- Some work site infrastructure facilities are poor so the authorities should take necessary step to provide most modern work equipment to the workers.

CONCLUSION

MGNREGA scheme is one of the best poverty eradication programme of Central Govt. launched in the year 2005. This Scheme aim at creating employment opportunities, thrift among rural people, improving standard of living of rural people, empowerment of women, create infrastructure development in rural area, prevent migration of rural people to urban area and largely participate in financial inclusion process by opening bank account and post office accounts. The present study analyses how this Scheme is beneficial for empowerment of women's in rural Kerala. The study conducted among MGNREG workers at Anthikad panchayath in Thrissur district shows that this scheme is highly beneficial to poor women in the Panchayath. Through this programme they can improve their earning capacity, decision making power, self-confidence, social participation and social status. Even though some draw backs are there in implementing this programme. It was a big movement of India Govt. in generating employment and bringing the standard living of poor especially women in rural area.

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