
MGNREGS AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT-A CASE STUDY IN SENDURAI VILLAGE PANJAYAT, ARIYALUR DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

Mr. V. Sivakumar

Assistant Professor, P.G & Research Department of Economics,
Government Arts College, Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu, India
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli)

Dr. A. Mohamed Abdullah, M.A., M.Phil., MBA, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, P.G & Research Department of Economics,
Periyar EVR College (Autonomous), Trichy, Tamil Nadu, India
(Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli)

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) provide various provision for enhancement of women empowerment in particular no discrimination in wage rate, one third of the workforce should be women labour, women have equitable and easy access to work, decent working conditions and women representation on decision making bodies. Because of this programme most of the women beneficiaries are earning money equal to their male counterpart, they can be able to think and act independently, equal participation in decision making process, more self confidence in deciding their lives and enhancement of entrepreneurial skills and self-respect in the male dominated society. As women MNREGP workers regularly interact with government officials without fear and nerves, their leadership and administrative skills in society, participation and decision-making power of women in PRI (Panjayat Raj Institutions), improvement in interpersonal skills and improvement in mobility of women worker from one place to other without the help of their male counterpart have improved significantly.

Key words: Women empowerment, MNREGA, Panjayat Raj Institution.

Cite this Article: V. Sivakumar and A. Mohamed Abdullah, MGNREGS and Women Empowerment-A Case Study in Sendurai Village Panjayat, Ariyalur District, Tamil Nadu, *International Journal of Management (IJM)*, 11(12), 2020, pp. 4067-4075. <https://iaeme.com/Home/issue/IJM?Volume=11&Issue=12>

1. INTRODUCTION

Wage employment programmes were undertaken in India during the Pre-British regime as well as during the British period mainly as a temporary relief measure in times of famines, droughts and other natural calamities. After the Independence, Government of India introduced various wage employment programmes in order to eradicate poverty, unemployment and starvation death.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) has inherent potential to transform rural India suffering from chronic unemployment. This scheme assures 100 day of unskilled manual work to rural households who volunteers to do such work during a financial year. Providing opportunities of employment is in consonance with the Directive Principles of State Policy which lay down that the State should promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting them from poverty and unemployment. The MNREGS is one of the most inclusive programme as it involves women, SCs and STs and socially disadvantaged people. According to Economic Survey 2018, approximately 4.6 crore households were given employment under the scheme, of which 54 percent were taken up by women. Among the women labour force, 22 per cent by Schedule Castes and 17 per cent by Schedule Tribes. In Tamilnadu, total number of active workers are 88,68,391 of which women active worker alone 69,72,333, women worker contributes 78.62 per cent of total active workforce in 2019-20. As per the data available on the NREGS portal, till August 24, Kerala has the highest (91.38 per cent) share of women's person days in the total during the current year(2021-22), followed by Puducherry (87), Tamil Nadu (84.82), Goa (75.75), Rajasthan (65.35) and Himachal Pradesh (60.31).

The success of the any development programme is mainly dependent on the participation of the community in general and particularly women, since the share of latter in employment are almost 50 per cent. As women are played a pivot role to socio-economic and political transformation, efforts are needed to strengthen their participation for household livelihood security as well as better asset management. The concept of "empowerment" has been much discussed and debated in the literature (ASPBAE and FAO, 1993; Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall and Edwards, 2010; Kabeer, 1994; Kabeer et al., 2011). Empowerment relates to various dimensions of change that lead to an enhanced sense of self-worth and social identity, a capacity to exercise strategic control over resources and live, that contribute to a more just distribution of power and possibilities, in the home and in society (Kabeer, 2008).

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Women have occupied an importance place in economic development of a country and their household. They are performing dual role for their socio-economic development. On the one side they are undertaking so many care taking activities such as taking care of family members, cleaning and keeping house – which remains undervalued, unacknowledged and invisible and on the other important side, many women workers support for enhancement of their family income. In this context, legally guaranteed employment under MNREGS has paved the way for women empowerment and economic independence. This study makes an importance contribution, how MNREGS contribute to enhancement of women's empowerment in their family and society.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To analyze the women empowerment at house hold level, community level before and after the implementation of the scheme in the study area.

3.1 Research Hypothesis

H0-There is no significant difference in women empowerment at households level and community level before and after the implementation of the scheme.

3.2 Alternative Hypothesis

H1-There is significant differences in women empowerment at house hold level and community level before and after the implementation of the scheme.

3.3 Research Methodology

The researcher planned to do the research on ‘Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme in Sendurai village panjayat of Ariyalur district, Tamilnadu’. Among the total population of 2172(Active workers), women beneficiaries alone 1673 of which the researcher has taken sample of 90 married women beneficiaries who are having age limit of 25 years to 55 years by using random sampling method.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kar (2009) in his study outlined three dimensions along which MGNREGA may impact women’s empowerment, including: (i) effects on income consumption (rise in income of women workers increases ability to choose consumption basket); (ii) intra-household effects (allowing women to access paid work, thus widening the scope of their decision-making roles at home); and (iii) community effects (after MGNREGA introduction, women’s participation in local governance processes increased).

Ramesh & Kumar (2009) said that MGNREGA holds the powerful prospect of bringing major changes in the lives of women. MGNREGA is playing a substantial role in empowering women economically and laying the basis for greater independence and self-esteem

K. Borah & R. Bordoloi (2014) in their research paper has discussed about the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment and identified the obstacles in the path of the implementation of the scheme. The paper revealed that female workers have significant benefits from MGNREGA and also identified some limitations in the implementations of the Act.

Fernanda Bárçia de Mattos and Sukti Dasgupta (2017) found that “women who worked in the MGNREGA programme in 2011–12 were significantly more likely to have control over household decisions than others. MGNREGS is therefore positively related to women’s empowerment.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Women Empowerment at Household Level

In every society women play a very crucial role and they are given chance, not only excelled in all areas, but also and they have played an important role in the development of country as a whole (Tiwari and Upadhyay 2012). Only through empowerment of women the Nation becomes strong. (Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam) Lack of adequate access to work opportunities and hence deprivation in control over income and assets, continuing over the life course of women, engenders inequality. The following table reveals the women empowerment at house hold level.

Table 1 Women empowerment at household level

S.No	Participation in MNREGS leads to enhancement of	Before Joining MNREGP			After Joining MNREGP		
		Significant Increase	Moderate Increase	No Change	Significant Increase	Moderate Increase	No Change
1	Self confidence	23(25.6)	36(40)	31(34.4)	56(62.2)	21(23.3)	13(14.4)
2	Participation of Family members in domestic work	49(54.4)	31(34.4)	10(11.2)	19(21.1)	58(64.4)	13(14.5)
3	Women in Decision-Making	21(23.3)	56(62.2)	13(14.5)	51(56.7)	25(27.8)	14(15.6)
4	Breaking of social, cultural and religious barriers	12(13.3)	57(63.3)	22(24.4)	53(58.9)	26(28.9)	11(12.2)
5	Financial and investment Knowledge	9(10)	47(52.2)	34(37.8)	61(67.8)	15(16.6)	14(15.6)
6	Innovative ideas	13(14.4)	41(45.6)	36(40)	49(54.4)	21(23.3)	20(22.3)

Source: compiled from primary data.

From the above table it is clear that 62.2 per cent of women beneficiaries' self-confidence has increased significantly and moderately increased by 23.3 per cent of women labors after joining this programme which was 25.6 per cent and 40 per cent respectively before joining this programme. Further, the above table reveals that 21.1 per cent of women beneficiaries unpaid family work has decreased significantly after joining this programme. It was 54.4 percent before joining this programme, which shows that their male counterpart and other family members are equally performing their unpaid family work such as food preparation, cleaning their home, family care taking activities etc.,

Regarding participation of decision making, 56.7 per cent of beneficiaries have said that their male counterpart and other family members are discussing with them before taking any decision regarding their children education, purchase and sale of livestock, valuable assets and fixed assets after joining of this programme.

Further, the above table indicates that 58.9 per cent of beneficiaries are freely allowed to break social, cultural and religious barriers after implementation of this programme and 13.2 per cent of beneficiaries alone said freedom of breaking social, cultural and religious barriers before joining this programme.

About financial and investment knowledge, 67.8 per cent of women beneficiaries said that their financial and investment knowledge have increased significantly and moderately have increased by 16.6 per cent of women beneficiaries after participation of this programme. As MNREGP work site provide a better platform to discuss with all beneficiaries and officials about the financial and investment opportunities such as availability of finance at low rate of interest, Investment pattern etc, majority of the beneficiaries knowledge about investment activities have increased certain extend.

From the above table (Table-1), it is clear that MNREGP has created a great opportunity to enhance women empowerment at household level i.e. their level of self confidence has increased, burden of unpaid family work has been shared by all family members. Before participation of this programme, it was done by women only. Further, MNREGP has paved the way for participation of women in decision making process. Now, all important family related decisions such as children education, purchase of valuable assets, important investment decision, purchase of fixed assets, family functions etc. are taken with due consultation of women workers.

Regarding freedom of breaking social, cultural and religious barriers, women beneficiaries are having full freedom to break above barriers. Further, the researcher has observed that there have been remarkable improvement in financial and investment decision and considerable improvement in entrepreneurial skills of the women entrepreneur.

Testing of Hypothesis

Inference

The below mentioned table (Table No-2) indicates that there are significant difference in women empowerment at house hold level ie, Enhancement of Self confidence, unpaid Family Work, participation of women in decision-making process, freedom of breaking social, cultural and religious barriers, enhancement of financial, investment knowledge and entrepreneurial skills before and after the joining the MNREGS scheme in the study area. Hence, the calculated value is less than table the value (P value). So the research hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted (H₁).

Table 2 Women empowerment at household level

Enhancement of Self confidence	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	1.9	0.75	0.34	0.67	4.8	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.6	0.77					
Unpaid Family Work	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	1.5	0.68	-0.36	0.48	-7.1	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.9	0.59					
Participation of women in decision-making	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	1.9	0.60	0.33	0.49	6.3	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.4	0.74					
Freedom of breaking social, cultural and religious barriers	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.1	0.6	0.56	0.49	10.7	89	0.00<0.05- Significant
After (n=90)	1.5	0.74					
Enhancement of financial and investment Knowledge	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.2	0.62	0.82	0.51	15.3	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.4	0.73					
Enhancement of Entrepreneurial skills	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.2	0.69	0.46	0.50	8.8	89	0.00<0.05- Significant
After (n=90)	1.7	0.78					

Statistical test: Paired Sample 't' test were used the above table

5.2 Women empowerment at community level

Women empowerment at community level refers to what extent women MNREGP workers interact with government officials without fear and nerves, their leadership and administrative skills in society, participation and decision making power of women in PRI (Panjayat Raj Institutions), improvement in interpersonal skills and improvement in mobility of women worker from one place to other without the help of their male counterpart.

Table 3 Women empowerment at community level

S.No	Participation in MNREGS leads to enhancement of	Before Joining MNREGP			After Joining MNREGP		
		Significant Increase	Moderate Increase	No Change	Significant Increase	Moderate Increase	No Change
1	Meet govt. Officials	31(34.4)	23(25.6)	36(40)	46(51.1)	26(28.9)	18(20)
2	leadership and management skills	21(23.3)	36(40)	33(36.7)	63(70)	13(14.4)	14(15.6)
3	Participation and decision making power of women in PRI	29(32.2)	25(27.8)	36(40)	69(76.7)	15(16.7)	6(6.6)
4	Develop social contact with others	19(21.1)	31(34.4)	40(44.4)	71(78.9)	9(10)	10(11.1)
5	Mobility from one place to other.	16(17.8)	27(30)	47(52.2)	59(65.6)	19(21.1)	12(13.3)

Source: compiled from primary data.

The above table reveals that more than half (51.1 per cent) of the women beneficiaries regularly interact with government official without any fear and their way of approaching officials also have significantly increased after joining this programme. Regarding leadership skill and management, 70 per cent of women beneficiaries leadership skills and management ability have significantly improved.

Further, the above table shows that 76.7 per cent of women beneficiaries are actively participated and expressed their views in PRI activities such as participation in Grama Sabha meeting and Social Audit process of MNREGP. Regarding enhancement of interpersonal skills, 78.9 per cent of beneficiaries interpersonal skills have improved significantly as this programme provides better opportunity to discuss and interact with co-workers regularly. Before implementation of this programme, such type of opportunity were rarely available. Nowadays, after implementation of this programme, women beneficiaries (65.6 per cent) are easily mobilize to different places such as shopping to meet their relatives, attend relative family functions without their male counterpart.

Testing of hypothesis

Table 4 Women Empowerment at community level

To meet govt. Officials	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	1.7	0.72	0.31	0.61	4.1	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.4	0.75					
Enhancement of leadership and management skills	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference

Before(n=90)	1.3	0.65	0.32	0.42	6.9	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.6	0.58					
Participation of women in decision-making	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	1.3	0.59	0.31	0.47	6.1	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.6	0.64					
Participation and decision making power of women in PRI	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.1	0.61	0.53	0.45	10.1	89	0.00<0.05- Significant
After (n=90)	1.3	0.71					
Develop social contact with other women	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.1	0.60	0.80	0.49	14.3	89	0.00<0.05 Significant
After (n=90)	1.3	0.71					
Mobility from one place to other.	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	t	df	Statistical inference
Before(n=90)	2.1	0.67	0.42	0.48	8.1	89	0.00<0.05- Significant
After (n=90)	1.6	0.73					

Statistical test: Paired Sample 't' test were used the above table

Inference

There is a significant difference in women empowerment at **community level i.e.,** Enhancement to meet government officials, improvement of leadership and management skills, participation and decision making power of women in PRI, development of social contact with other women and mobility of women beneficiaries from one place to other before and after the joining the MNREGS scheme in the study area. Since the calculated value is less than table value (P value).the research hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted (H₁).

6. FINDINGS, SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Findings

- 62.2 per cent of women beneficiaries' self-confidence has increased significantly and moderately increased by 23.3 per cent of women labors after joining this programme
- 21.1 per cent of women beneficiaries unpaid family work has decreased significantly after joining this programme , it was 54.4 percent before joining this programme.
- 56.7 per cent of beneficiaries have said that their male counterpart and other family members are discussing with women beneficiaries before taking any decision regarding their family matters.
- 58.9 per cent of beneficiaries said that their family members are freely allowed to break social, cultural and religious barriers after implementation of this programme
- 67.8 per cent of women beneficiaries said that their financial and investment knowledge have increased significantly and moderately have increased by 16.6 per cent of women beneficiaries after participation of this programme.

- 54.4 per cent of women beneficiaries said that their knowledge to do to do new business and trade has increased significantly and moderately have increased by 23.3 per cent.
- 76.7 per cent of women beneficiaries are actively participated and expressed their views in PRI activities such as participation in Grama Sabha meeting and Social Audit process of MNREGP.
- 78.9 per cent of beneficiaries interpersonal skills have improved significantly, as this programme provide better opportunity to discuss and interact with co- workers regularly.
- 65.6 per cent of women beneficiaries find easy to move to different places for shopping, meet their relatives, attend relative family functions without their male counterpart.
- More than half (51.1per cent) of the women beneficiaries regularly interact with government official without any fear and their way of approaching officials also have significantly increased.
- 70 per cent of women beneficiary's leadership skills and management ability have improved significantly.

6.2 Suggestions

- The concern authority should take to conduct programmers like seminar, workshop, etc with eminent personalities for further improving their interpersonal skills, personality development, communication and writing skills.
- Successful women entrepreneurs of varies fields are to be arranged for sharing their experiences in business so that it will motive women beneficiaries to do new ventures, which enhance women empowerment at house hold and community level.

6.3 Conclusion

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (MGNREGP) is the entirely different income generation and poverty alleviation programme among the various programme introduced since independence. By providing legally guaranteed employment to its registered manual unskilled labourer in rural area, this programme has brought about a silent revolution in rural development of the country. As most of the women beneficiaries in rural areas regularly gathered in worksite place, it provide better platform to discuss their ideas about savings, investment, children education, important family functions, innovative idea about establishment of small business, which promote women empowerment at house hold and community level, their economic empowerment also has promoted. Hence women have become inevitable part in family and community decision making process

REFERENCES

- [1] Mattos, F. B. D., & Dasgupta, S. (2017). MGNREGA, paid work and women's empowerment (No. 994974190802676). International Labour Organization.
- [2] Kar, S. (2013). Empowerment of women through MGNREGS: issues and challenges. *Odisha Review*, 69(7-8), 76-80.
- [3] Tiwari, N., & Upadhyay, R. (2012). Constraints Faced by the Women Beneficiaries under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). *Studies on Home and Community Science*, 6(2), 99-102.

- [4] Ramesh, G., & Krishnakumar, T. (2009). A study in Karimnagar district in Andhra Pradesh. *Kurukshetra*, 58(2), 29-30.
- [5] Various hand books of MNREGP
- [6] Official website of MNREGP.
- [7] Gopinath, R., & Chitra, A. (2020). Business- Family Interface and the Capacity of Managing Challenges Faced by the Women Entrepreneurs of Informal Sector - A Relationship Study, *TEST Engineering & Management*, 83(May-June), 24905 – 24911.
- [8] Unnamalai, T., & Gopinath, R. (2020). Brand Preferences and Level of Satisfaction in Consuming Noodles Among Working Women in Tiruchirappalli, *International Journal of Management*, 11(11), 2909-2917.
- [9] Suchitra, K., & Gopinath, R. (2020). Influence of Knowledge Management on Empowerment of Women Entrepreneurs in Tiruchirappalli District, *International Journal of Management*, 11(5), 1790-1796.
- [10] Suchitra, K., & Gopinath, R. (2020). Impact of Knowledge Management Practice on Women Entrepreneur and Organizational Performance, *International Journal of Management*, 11(6), 2234-2244.