

Associates and Determinants of the MGNREGA: An Indian Case Study of Rural Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study sought to investigate the various types of employees who took part in the MGNREGA programme. According to the findings, the employment scenario is determined by economic status, social group, education, gender, family size, and land holdings.

Approach/Methodology/Design: A micro-level analysis was conducted along the dichotomies of various variables to consider the associates and determinates of labour participation in MGNREGA. The Chi-square test and logistic regression were used to analyze data from the survey's various indicators.

Findings: The employment scenario is determined by economic status, social group, education, gender, family size, and land holdings. MGNREGA is more appealing to households that belong to a disadvantaged community, have a low level of education, or have a large family. Increased working days with efficient work in rural areas are needed to serve all areas.

Originality/value: The traditional model of joint households in rural areas is being broken as a result of the program's implementation, as a proportion of work cards are held by smaller families. The educational level of the beneficiaries has been discovered to be lower. According to the results, the socio-economic condition of households regularly working under the MGNREGA scheme is extremely poor in rural areas.

INTRODUCTION

Keynes argued that unemployment was caused by a fall in aggregate demand due to a lack of spending within an economy. It means that the only way to get an economy out of a slump is for the government to boost demand by injecting money into the economy—in other words, by spending. As a result, MGNREGA is a critical source of funding for the rural economy and job creation (Minsky, H. P. 1976). Keynes called for increased government spending to generate sustainable jobs. According to a World Bank report (2014), the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a "stellar example of rural development". MGNREGS has been called a "heart of the core" scheme for achieving SDG 1 – Zero Poverty, and the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has been named the designated nodal agency for achieving SDG 1 – Zero Poverty. MGNREGS 'contribution to SDG 1 was recorded in the VNR 2017, as were contributions to SDGs 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 8 –

Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities². MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) is an important part of India's social protection policy and one of the country's main pillars of the national social protection floor, providing temporary employment and a measure of income security to millions of rural households³ (ILO, 2014). By establishing a legal foundation for the world's largest jobs programme, the MGNREG Act has provided a source of income for rural workers, increased wage rates, increased female participation rates, and generated long-term assets since its introduction in 2006. MGNREGS has provided jobs to many rural households in recent years. MGNREGS has resulted in an eightfold rise in public sector jobs, according to the government, with "no doubt that its effect on rural wage earnings and poverty has been much greater than all previous rural employment schemes"⁴ (GoI, 2013). The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a game-changing piece of legislation that reflects ILO Recommendation No. 202 principles in many respects⁵.

In terms of its legal status as a Parliamentary Act, its rights-based existence, openness guarantees, and arrangements for the inclusion of vulnerable communities, unemployment benefits, and the proximity clause for jobs, demand-based nature, and scheme spending, MGNREGA is ground-breaking (Ambast et al., 2008). Rural jobs are inextricably linked to the first millennium development goal of halving the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day. To retain current rural employment levels as well as the more than 100 million new employees anticipated in the decade leading up to 2015, more jobs must be developed. Rural poverty has remained a policy issue in India despite high rates of economic growth since the 1990s. Rural India is home to more than two-thirds of the country's population. India has seven crore unemployed people, according to the National Sample Survey Report from 2012⁶. Employment is required if per capita income is to rise and household poverty is to be eradicated. The following are some of MGNREGA's most distinguishing features. Under the Act, every rural household is entitled to a minimum of 100 days of paid employment. People must be able to obtain employment when they need it. This provision is part of a bottom-up planning process that involves public involvement in the definition and approval of beneficial projects.

If no work is found, the job guarantee is backed up by a clause that allows for the payment of an unemployment allowance. Both the rights-based entitlement and the demand-driven preparation and allocation of jobs are underpinned by transparency guarantees, social audit, and dispute resolution mechanisms, allowing for remedies if the constitutional entitlements are not fulfilled. Additional clauses in the MGNREGA's work guarantee provision, which guarantees universal access to the rural community in the constitution, ensure that the scheme is accessible to everyone. To ensure accessibility, jobs must be accessible within a 5-kilometer radius of the village. Self-selection and demand decide participation, and applications must be submitted within 15 days of the application deadline. The Act requires a one-third participation rate for women and preferential treatment for India's Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) peoples, who have historically and currently been among the country's most disadvantaged groups⁷. Only Kerala and Rajasthan had a job structure that favoured the poor, with poorer families working more days than the average (Dutta et al., 2012).

Jatav and Sen (2013) announce two major findings based on multivariate analyses. One, despite the fact that non-farm employment in rural areas is largely driven by distress, there are substantial educational, age, and gender entry barriers for rural workers in the non-farm sector. The authors stress the significance of the programme, claiming that without it, the

jobless crisis in rural labour markets would have been much worse. After the MGNREGA was implemented, the agricultural wage rate has risen. Women's salaries have increased at a faster pace than men's (Dasgupta, 2013). Imbert et al. (2015) investigate the effect of a broad rural workfare programme on private employment and wages in India. The advantages for the most vulnerable are important. MGNREGA's effect on the rural agricultural sector is examined by D. Varshney et al. (2018). The current research, conducted in Rajasthan's western district, examined how MGNREGA affects the rural poor, who are mostly landless, small, and marginal farmers. The research focuses on a group of 240 people who were chosen at random to take part.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

In rural areas, physical work availability is a primary determinant of MGNREGA eligibility. As a result, attempts to cover the scheme's social, economic, and demographic dimensions have been made. To capture the associates and determinants of MGNREGA as a catalyst in rural India, six locations in Rajasthan's western district were chosen. Since a rainfed village and an irrigated village can represent different work scenarios, one district with different locations and population measurements was chosen. The primary survey collected information on a wide range of MGNREGA topics and their determinants. To ensure that samples were drawn in an unbiased manner, a simple random sampling technique was used to collect samples from all locations.

A total of 240 households were polled, with random samples drawn from different geographic groups to ensure that the population was accurately represented (Kruskal and Mosteller 1979). A closed-end questionnaire was used to collect the data. Despite the fact that this reduced the number of possible answers, the quantitative analysis insisted on its use. To evaluate the associates and determinants of MGNREGA labour participation, researchers looked at the social group, education, age, family size, economic category, gender, and the size of landholdings. From 240 respondents gathered primary data for the financial year 2018-19 for the analysis in 2019-20. The district is divided into sixteen blocks, six of which were chosen, and forty MGNREGA respondents were chosen from each block. Data was obtained using a structured interview schedule, and the effect of the MGNREGA procedure on beneficiaries was evaluated using simple mean, percentages, and the chi-square test. This paper's variables are categorical in nature. Since the variables are categorical, the chi-square test and logistic regression test are suitable for this study. The Chi-square test is used to show how variables are related. Logistic regression was used in the experiments that revealed a meaningful relationship. Logistic regression reveals the nature of the relationship.

Chi-square test

Definition of variables and Chi-Square Tests

The final variable in this study was evaluated using the relationship between each predictor variable and the response variable. The significance of each coefficient in the model was determined using the chi-square, which is distributed as a chi-square with degree of freedom and likelihood ratio test. A likelihood ratio (LR) chi-square test was used to look at the contribution of each predictor variable to the outcome variable. To prove dependency (alternative hypothesis) and disprove freedom, the Chi-square test was used (null hypothesis). The chi-square test is suitable for this study since the variables are categorical.

H₀: Number of days worked under MGNREGA and independent variables in the Scheme are independent

H₁: Number of days worked under MGNREGA and independent variables in the Scheme are not independent.

Table 1. Explanation of MGNREGA labour participation dichotomous distribution

Dichotomous values	Conditions satisfied
1	for not interested in MGNREGA < 50 days
0	for otherwise >50 days

Source: Authors

Logistic regression

The null hypothesis is dismissed when the chi-square test reveals some relation. Logistic regression, which tells about a variable's determinants, is used to deal with variables that display a relation. As a result, seven independent variables were chosen to test the hypothesis of whether or not they explain a household's MGNREGA interest status. These variables were chosen based on theoretical explanations and observational findings from different studies. Three components make up the broad determinant variables of MGNREGA working days used in this analysis. The provision of resources is one of the community-level characteristics (education). Characteristics of the household and individuals, among the most important are: Family size, age structure, and gender are all factors to consider, economic factors include farm size and economic category (BPL/APL), social: a social group (General, OBC, SC, ST). As a result, the seven variables mentioned below were used to classify the major associates and determinants of household participation in the MGNREGA programme.

The dependent variable of the model (No of days worked under MGNREGA): It was represented in the models by two possible alternative ways: 1 for not interested in MGNREGA and 0 for otherwise. The information, which identifies the interested and not interested, is obtained by comparing number of days worked under MGNREGA that is more than 50 and less than 50. Households beyond this threshold is said to be not interested in MGNREGA, otherwise yes.

Independent variables: The independent variables that are expected to have an association with MGNREGA participate, selected on the basis of theoretical explanations and the results of various empirical studies. Efforts were made to incorporate demographic and socioeconomic factors, which are expected to be relevant in the rural livelihood systems of the district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MGNREGA represents a paradigm shift from previous wage employment programmes because of its rights-based scheme, which provides a legal guarantee of wage jobs, and its stakeholder empowerment initiatives. It's also notable that it's the world's largest public works programme, with an annual budget of Rs 40,000 crore (\$6.7 billion). Natural resource management and livelihood generation are approached holistically. Transparency and accountability mechanisms in the MGNREGA allow for unprecedented performance accountability, especially against direct stakeholders. According to one study based on the 66th round of the National Sample Survey, 24 percent of rural households earned jobs through an MGNREG scheme (MGNREGS) between July 2009 and June 2010, while 19 percent said they searched for such work but were unable to find it (NSSO, 2011).

Socio-economic factors for MGNREGA beneficiaries

MGNREGA participation is determined by a variety of factors, the majority of which are influenced by socioeconomic factors. Age, gender, family size, economic category, and social group are all socio-economic factors that contribute to the grinding poverty that exists in the study area. Middle-aged people made up three-quarters of the beneficiaries (70%) followed by the elderly (20.85%) and the young (7.5%). The majority of the beneficiaries (69.16 percent) were female, while 30.84 percent were male. Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and General Castes accounted for 47.08 percent of the respondents, while Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 52.92 percent (STs). Around 17.5% of the beneficiaries had completed primary school, 7.5% had completed middle school, just 1.25 percent had completed high school, and the majority of the beneficiaries were illiterate (73.75%). It was discovered that the majority of the respondents lacked proper education skills, so they favoured manual labour. The majority of beneficiaries (42.5%) were marginal farmers, followed by small farmers (38.75%), medium farmers (9.15%), and landless farmers (9.60%), respectively. It is evident from the results that the percentage of female workers is approx 70 percent in the sample families. It indicates that this scheme gives importance to female workers. According to the scheme Act, it is true.

Results of cross tabulation and chi-square test

We discovered that the earlier researchers' statistical tools produced excellent results. As a result, we've chosen to use similar statistical methods in our research to look at the number of days covered by the MGNREGA Scheme in district. The independent variables that influenced respondents' decision to choose the MGNREGA scheme have an effect on the number of days worked in MGNREGA in each district. Age, gender, education, social group, economic category, family size, and size of land holdings were the independent variables. . The Chi-Square Test was used to assess the significance of the selected variables in this study. The Coefficient of Contingency (COC) was used to measure the intensity of the variables in relation. The chi-square test of independence aids the researcher in determining whether variables are independent or have a history of dependency. The chi-square statistic is described as the following:

$$X^2 = \sum_i \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

The number of cases in category i that have been observed is O_i , and the number of cases in category i that have been expected is E_i . The difference between the observed and predicted number of cases in each group is used to measure the chi-square statistic. The difference is divided by the estimated number of cases in that group. The chi-squared value, which is the sum of all the sets, is the average of these values. Using the methods mentioned previously, MGNREGA labour participation was divided into dichotomous variables. Table 2 illustrates the relationship between different variables and MGNREGA working conditions.

Table 2. Consolidation of Hypothesis Test results on the variables

Variables	Calculated value of X^2	Table value of X^2	Coefficient of contingency	Hypothesis test Result
Age	97.316	9.488	0.53	H^1 accepted
Size of family	31.174	5.991	0.339	H^1 accepted
Economic Category	6.418	3.841	0.161	H^1 accepted
Social Group	4.746	3.841	0.139	H^1 accepted
Size of land holdings	103.212	7.815	0.548	H^1 accepted

Education	11.282	3.841	0.67	H ¹ accepted
Gender	6.132	3.841	0.157	H ¹ accepted

Source: Computation by Author (SPSS)

Table 2 revealed a strong relationship between the number of days worked under MGNREGA and respondents' age, family size, economic category, social group, size of land holdings, education, and gender in the study area. This implied that there is a significant relationship between dependent and independent variables of respondents. The calculated value of χ^2 is more than the table value of χ^2 at $P \leq 0.05$ level, $df = 1, 2, 3$ and 4 . The null hypothesis (H_0) "Number of days worked under MGNREGA and independent variables in the Scheme are independent", was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) "Number of days worked under MGNREGA and independent variables in the Scheme are not independent" was accepted. The coefficient of contingency was used to determine the intensity of the relationship because chi-square normally implies statistical significance but does not express the magnitude of a relationship. $C = 0.53, 0.339, 0.16, 0.139, 0.54, 0.67,$ and 0.15 were the coefficients of measured contingency, respectively. The consolidated result in Table 2 shows that of all independent variables, the independent variable "Size of land holdings" has the highest coefficient of contingency. The size of land holdings seems to have affected whether or not villagers are interested in the MGNREGA scheme; the greater the holdings, the less interested the respondents are in the scheme. Finally, the results reveal that the MGNREGA Scheme has made a substantial contribution to villager development and economic growth.

MGNREGA labour participation determinants (logistic regression results)

It is important to investigate the factors that influence MGNREGA labour force participation. Primary determinants of labour force participation, among other items, were determined using a logistic regression analysis. In order to assess the determinants of labour force participation, the model uses variables that have already been studied (and have shown a clear relationship). The Binary logistic regression is a form of regression analysis that uses a dummy variable as the dependent variable (coded 0 and 1, here 1 for not interested in MGNREGA and 0 for otherwise). To find out what factors affect labour participation in the MGNREGA programme. MGNREGA participation is examined as a function of a variety of factors, including gender, education, social group, economic status, land holding size, and worker age. However, incorporating all of these variables into the model has clear limitations (Bewick et al. 2005). The following form of logistic regression model captures the relationships between workers' participation in MGNREGA and its major determinants.

$$\ln \left[\frac{P_{(LFMGN)}}{1 - P_{(LFMGN)}} \right] = \alpha + \beta_1 L_{GN} + \beta_2 L_{SG} + \beta_3 L_{EC} + \beta_4 L_{EDU} + \beta_5 L_{AGE} + \beta_6 L_{LH} + \beta_7 L_{FS} + u_i$$

$P_{(LFMGN)}$ is the probability of labour force participation in MGNREGA; L_{GN} is the gender of labour; L_{SG} is the social group; L_{EC} is the economic category of labour (above poverty line (APL) and below poverty line (BPL)); L_{EDU} is the education of labours; L_{AGE} is the age of labours; L_{LH} is the size of land holding; L_{FS} is the size of family; u_i is the error term. Table 3 displays the B coefficient exponentiations for MGNREGA labour force participation, which are odds ratios for each segment of each variable. Probability is used to measure odds, which range from 0 to infinity. The probability of success divided by the probability of failure is known as the odds. One category has been designated as the reference category for each dimension of determinant variables. The odds ratio among different categories of all variables is discussed in the following section, which can also be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression model showing the odds ratio for labour participation in MGNREGA

Variables	Odd Ratio
Economic category	
APL ^R	1.00
BPL	0.794
Gender	
Male ^R	1.00
Female	2.242
Social Group	
SC and ST ^R	1.00
General and OBC	0.889
Education	
Illiterate ^R	1.00
Primary school	0.232
Middle school	0.101 [*]
High school	0.017 ^{**}
Family size	
Low ^R	1.00
Medium	5.268
Large	6.374 ^{***}
Size of Land holding	
Landless ^R	1.00
Marginal farmers	4.432 [*]
Small farmers	4.045 ^{**}
Medium farmers	0.953
Age	
Young ^R (18-30)	1.00
Middle (31-50)	9.553
Old (>50)	2.780
Chi-square test	115.615 ^{***}

(R)– Reference category; Level of significance– ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

Source: Estimates based on primary survey data

With respect to social group, the odds ratio of general and OBC staff participating in MGNREGA is hypothesized to be less than one. Since staff from the general group took part in MGNREGA, the Odd Ratio of APL households are higher than that of BPL households. In other words, MGNREGA beneficiaries are more likely to come from low-income families.

Table 3 displays the results of the logit regression. MGNREGA participants are more likely to be from SC/ST castes since the odds ratio of general and OBC is less than one. MGNREGA participants from BPL families have an Odd ratio of less than one, indicating that MGNREGA participants are more likely to be from APL. It's worth noting that, as compared to male participants as a control group, the Odds Ratio of Female Staff in MGNREGA is as high as 2.242. It suggests that female employees make up a greater proportion of the workforce or are more likely to work under the MGNREGA programme than male employees. The Odd ratio of education of MGNREGA participants supports the finding that the scheme employs the least qualified, as the reference group is illiterate, with an Odd ratio of one, and all other groups have a lower Odd ratio. The Odd ratio of participant family size is higher for large families, since small families are considered the reference

category and the Odd ratio is one, meaning that medium and large family sizes have Odds of 1.924 and 2.525, respectively, indicating that the likelihood of having a joint family is higher in MGNREGA. The age factor emerges as a significant determinant of labour participation in the MGNREGA. When workers' ages are compared, the odd ratio of the reference category of young age is one, indicating that middle age has a 9 times higher chance of participating in MGNREGA, whereas old age has a 2.7 times higher chance of participating in MGNREGA, as opposed to young age, which studies for better jobs and is less interested in being seen in research.

As people's educational levels rise, they are less interested in participating in the MGNREGA. Land size is a major determinant of MGNREGA participation, with marginal farmers and small farmers having higher odds (4.432, 4.045) than large farmers who have lower odds. Households with more land show less interest, and landless farmers show more days to work as permanent jobs rather than the MGNREGA's 100 days. The logit model shows that MGNREGA is used by female workers who are less educated and come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Female employees were mainly engaged in household tasks and had long since left the labour market, according to an analysis of their primary engagement. Since these people aren't working, it's an indirect indicator that they have a low reservation income. The entire model accounts for 39% of variations.

Discussion

A number of other factors, such as demographic factors, social factors, economic factors, and so on, affect MGNREGA labour participation. According to the findings, MGNREGA labour force participation is influenced by social factors such as household social class, education level, household land size, family size, and economic status (APL/BPL). The Chi-square test results indicate that the variables have a relationship, allowing us to dismiss the null hypothesis. Additionally, logistic regression was used to evaluate the nature of this relationship, with the results revealing that associates are also strong determinants. Inequities in MGNREGA are clearly visible in the odds ratios (probabilities of labour participation in MGNREGA) in different groups. A household that belongs to a lower caste, has less schooling, is unemployed, is in their middle age, and is female has a higher chance of participating in the MGNREGA scheme. The scheme would be hampered by inequities based on caste, education, gender, and having more land size. MGNREGA has played a crucial role in creating employment and revenue in the rural India. It is important to assess whether any Government of India (GOI) welfare initiative has supported the intended target population while evaluating the scheme. Several questions about the program's socioeconomic effects were asked in order to capture people's experiences and assess its impact.

Since MGNREGA is being implemented in all of India's districts, it was difficult to have a monitoring community to determine the improvements attributed to the programme. As a result, a control group of households working less than 50 days per year was established. Households of more than 50 days of work in a year were part of the program's culture. A comprehensive analysis of different socio-economic indicators between the programme and control groups was used to assess the impact of MGNREGA. It was important to learn about people's employment and migration experiences because MGNREGA is a demand-driven job creation programme that provides jobs to people in need. It is clear that those who worked for a longer period of time had a more favourable response to the programme; for example, 88 percent of those who "worked for a longer period of time" said the programme helped to minimize seasonal migration, compared to just 12 percent of those who "worked for a shorter period of time." There seems to be a divide of opinion between those who work more hours

and those who work fewer hours. There seems to be a major difference, as well. Similarly, the measures of 'returning people to villages' and 'increasing wage rates' seem to have had a substantial effect.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Inequities in MGNREGA work are induced by demographic, social, and economic influences, as well as availability, according to the report. These variables have been established as important determinants and associates of MGNREGA labour participation. People from comparatively backward ethnic groups, as well as people from general and other backward castes, regularly participate in higher proportions in MGNREGA projects, according to the survey. The traditional model of joint households in rural areas is being broken as a result of the program's implementation, as a proportion of work cards are held by smaller families. The educational level of the beneficiaries has been discovered to be lower. According to the results, the socio-economic condition of households regularly working under the MGNREGA scheme is extremely poor in rural areas. They are the worst of the poor. Though socioeconomic conditions have been gradually improving, some developmental interventions can be integrated with the scheme to speed up the pace of progress, with an emphasis on those households who have been using the scheme on a regular basis for a long time. The impervious surface combined with rapid population growth has put a strain on available jobs. To increase work prospects and boost construction quality, projects like this can be introduced in more places and on more days. MGNREGA is critical in every way to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, reducing inequality, and increasing income in rural India. According to Article 23.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to work, to a free choice of jobs, to just and favourable working conditions, and to be free of unemployment. Article 14 provides a right to "equality of opportunity" for jobs or appointments so that the state can provide everyone in the region with equitable, sustainable, clean, and affordable work, regardless of caste, economic status, or other factors. As a result, the study also found that after enrolling in the MGNREGA programme, which prioritizes poverty reduction and long-term growth, income increases. It is a good scheme for India's rural areas.

Conflict of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Notes

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2. <https://www.unicef.org/sdgs>
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