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Livelihood Security and Sustainability of MGNREGA in Tribal Areas

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Abstract

This article examined the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), an Indian government-run social-security program for impoverished rural households, income and employment patterns. MGNREGA was formed to encompass all underprivileged rural society members, regardless of caste, gender, or socioeconomic class. The study observed the influence of MGNREGA on job security, income production, governance, and how MGNREGA attempts to analyze the impact on the sustainable livelihood of rural poor in Annupur and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh. According to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 200 tribal job card holders were included in this study. Male and female MGNREGA beneficiaries were chosen, and information was collected with the help of a questioner. Data was analysed using the proper statistical methods on frequency, percentage, means, correlation tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and conclusions were made from the analysis. As a result of the studies on MGNREGA, it can be said that the social level of these tribal areas has benefited greatly from the Scheme. These loopholes must be filled to increase the benefits to rural even more.

1. Introduction

It has been a decade and a half since the United Progressive Alliance administration enacted the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005, aiming to eradicate India's poverty. Despite statements to the contrary made by both Governments, even after decade years of

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implementation, the impact of the MGNREGA on the country's overall level of poverty has yet to be determined (Giribabu, Reddy, & Pedineni, 2019). One reason is awareness, or rather the lack of it, as is highlighted by studies conducted across various Indian States, including Andhara Pradesh (Muthaiyan & Didde, 2013), Assam (Gopal & Sarma, 2017), Bihar (Sinha, 2013); Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan (Pankaj & Tankha, 2010), Punjab (Kaur and Randhawa, 2016); Tamil Nadu (Sivasankari & Bharati, 2012), Uttarakhand (Singh, Negi & Dhana, 2016), Uttar Pradesh (Akhtar & Saleem, 2015) and 5 North East states of India including Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland (Team Metamorphosis, 2016).

The call for creating awareness among the rural masses about any development programmes in India has been a major concern among policymakers. The success of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA's implementation has been critically scrutinized over the years by various stakeholders, including citizens, civil society organizations, policymakers, academic and research organizations (MoRD, GoI, 2017). More so, research related to developmental studies has resurfaced and proved prominence among academics (UNDP, 2002; as cited in Maiorano, 2014). The study looks at how MGNREGA affects job security, income generation, governance, the security and sustainability of tribal areas' livelihoods, the present situation in a chosen village in tribal dominated districts in Madhya Pradesh, and how MGNREGA improves outcomes.

MGNREGA as an Important Step for Rural India's Growth

The Indian government has taken several steps to address the issue of poverty. From time to time, poverty alleviation programmes such as wage employment programs, rural housing schemes, and a public distribution system have been launched. Some were relatively successful in combating poverty, while major flaws in their implementation plagued others. However, many programs could not deliver social security to the rural poor (Singh, 2013). However, the MGNREG programme primarily benefits the rural poor to reduce rural poverty and unemployment. It ensures that the rural poor have an alternative source of income. The State and Central governments have several programmes to empower poor rural households.

However, they are unable to benefit from such schemes and programmes. Local politicians and government officials will waste whatever funds available for their growth. They will be unable to make any noticeable changes MGNREGA, as a social safety net, has the potential to transform rural India into a more dynamic, equal, and connected society. It is the most significant rural development act in India's history and the best job-guarantee scheme in the country. It also gives rural people the right to work.

The Act's goal is to provide at least a hundred days of legal employment security to any rural household in India that is prepared to conduct unskilled manual labour under the scheme. The act was introduced to assist and empower rural people, primarily restricted or unskilled implements, to people living in rural areas of the country, whether or not they are poor. The schemes' objectivity includes creating strong assets and strengthening the rural poor's living natural resource base (http://www.mgnrega.co.in). The Act's suggested work addresses the causes of chronic poverty, such as drought, deforestation, soil erosion, and so on, so that the process of job creation is a sustainable livelihood for the rural poor. In the current study, a person is considered rural poor if their income is significantly lower than the population's average income.

The poor lack essential capabilities, such as insufficient income or education, poor health, feeling helpless, not having political freedoms, and living in a rural area. Livelihoods are assumed to be the ensemble or opportunity set of capabilities, assets, and activities required to make a living (Haan,

2000). They depend on access to natural, human, physical, financial, social, and cultural capital (assets). The social relations people draw upon to combine, transform, and increase their assets; and the ways people deploy and enhance their capabilities to act and make lives meaningful (Scoones, 2009) and (Bebbington, 1999). People's livelihoods are dynamic and adapt and change due to internal and external pressures. Finally, effective livelihoods turn assets into income, dignity, and agency to enhance living conditions, which is critical for poverty reduction (Devereux, 2001). However, according to several studies conducted in various states, the MGNREGA has successfully empowered the rural poor.

2. Materials and Methods

Review previous research papers might aid in understanding the theoretical and conceptual framework related to the study. MGNREGA has received much attention from politicians, government policymakers, and academics because it is the Indian government's flagship programme. This study will add to the MGNREGA literature, which to date has primarily consisted of aggregate national, state level, or multi-state evaluations (Deininger & Liu, 2013; Dreze & Khera, 2009; Dreze, 2010; Reddy et al., 2010; Imbert & Papp, 2015; Varman & Kumar, 2020;), already studies that focus on single, or a few, factors such as the relationship between MGREGA and stunted growth (Chopra, 2019). To summarise, while MGNREGA appears to have provided some much-needed employment for India's most marginalised people, one of the scheme's major limitations to date has been its capacity to generate enough jobs to fulfill demand.

Furthermore, corruption appears to be a barrier to successful deployment. Some states have a higher prevalence of this finding than others. Despite the great number of empirical research examining the MGNREGA's impact, few studies provide an in-depth, qualitative study of the MGNREGA's implementation and outcomes in specific locations. Sudarshan *et al.* (2010) in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan, Carswell & De Neves (2014) mixed-method study in Tamil Nadu are notable exceptions. Mishra (2011) investigated the creation of assets under the MGNREGA. The study found that assets developed under MGNREGA considerably influence rural families. These assets' productive value may be increased with more excellent monitoring procedures. Panda & Majumder (2013) investigated rural development efforts in India. According to the report, MGNREGA provides an alternative source of income, minimizing migration, limiting child labour, alleviating poverty, and empowering villages through the production of productive assets like road building, water tank cleaning, soil and water conservation activities, and so on. It has been named the world's largest anti-poverty project due to its efforts.

Mallikarjuna (2013) examined MGNREGA's effectiveness and found that it provides an adequate safety net for the unemployed, even during hunger and drought. It has provided them with sufficient purchasing power, allowing them to meet their fundamental needs, such as food. MGNREGA offers rural residents a source of income and engages them in non-agricultural activities. Bhat & Mariyappan (2015) investigated rural poverty alleviation through the MGNREGA programme. MGNREGA has directly benefited agricultural laborers, according to the report, because the plan pushed for an increase in the minimum agricultural wage rate. MGNREGA empowered the most vulnerable members of society, giving them a new feeling of identity and authority.

Rational of the Study

The sustainable development approach recognizes the impact of macro-level strategies on poor rural empowerment. Furthermore, policies developed at the central and state levels are sometimes

inconsistent with local employment goals. This gap between micro-level achievement and macro-level policy outcomes obstructs poor rural access to assets for occupational development. It makes more difficult for poor rural households to end poverty. This study examines the impact of the MGNREGA or Sustainable Livelihood of rural poor in Madhya Pradesh on their social-economic realities.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of a participant of a rural household.
2. To examine the impact of MGNREGA on the tribal poor's social and financial life.

Methodology

Before commencing data collection, ethics approval was sought from Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh. The present study used a descriptive research design as it deals with an area where researchers have made little attempts to analyze the influence of the MGNREG programme on the sustainable livelihood of tribal poor in Annupur and Dindori districts which are the study's universe. According to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 200 tribal job card holders were included in this study, and a purposive sample was used. Similar studies (Ramya, 2018; Muthaiyan & Didde; 2013; Esteves *et al*, 2013) accounted SCs/STs as the most vulnerable section of the rural poor in line with the CAG report, which categorically states as the poorest of the poor. Apart from the special category groups classified, other vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, women in special circumstances, and seniors above 65 years are taken as specially excluded groups for this study.

Thus, the total number of job card issued was taken as the total population. Every questionnaire was individually administered by the authors adopting face to face method directly with the respondents. However, assistance of local facilitators/interpreters was sought mainly when communication barriers arose. Thus 100% correct response rate was achieved. The approximate completion time of each questionnaire was 15 to 20 minutes. In addition, we did focus group discussions in each of the sample villages/pradhans comprising of elders/authorities/members etc. Moreover, pools of comments/suggestions/ complaints were collected. From each of the sample villages/pradhans, 10 vulnerable adult individuals belonging to the category of specially excluded groups (as per the MGNREG Act) and whose names or households have job cards were randomly approached between May to July 2022 to participate in the study.

The data collected were first codified, and the data was then input and processed using IBM SPSS 23.0 (Statistical Product and Service Solutions). The studies were conducted using relevant statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, Paired t-test, T-test, and Factor analysis. The descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation) provide data on the sample respondents' responses.

3. Results and Discussions

Profile Variables of beneficiaries and Group Variables

Table 1 shows the gender of 200 respondents. Clearly, the respondents are 100 in both male and female beneficiaries are equal. The respondents are mostly around 55 and above in Dindori district followed by 45-54 year of ages, whereas below 25 years has the lowest beneficiaries. The distribution

of academic qualifications amongst the 200 respondents are mostly literate with 134 respondents being illiterate in both districts. The primary respondents' qualification is 31, among the group, followed by high school 16 and lowest by higher secondary 5 beneficiaries. The study indicates that 103 respondents are 5 to 9 family member size in rural and 25 are above 10 family member size in the study area. Most beneficiaries are involved in cultivation through paddy (79) and Cereals (40) respondents in both the districts. The information of the agricultural income distribution among the beneficiaries. Among the group Rs.10000 to Rs 20000 score 126, followed by Rs. 20001 to 30000 and 30001 to 40000 score 11 beneficiaries each.

Table 1
Socio-demographic profile of the beneficiaries (N=200)

Categories	Variables	Dindori (n=100)	Kotma (n=100)	Total (n = 200)
Gender	Male	45(45)	55(55)	100
	Female	55(55)	45(45)	100
Age (Yrs)	Below 25	7(7)	7(7)	14(7)
	25 - 34	4(4)	18(18)	22(11)
	35 - 44	7(7)	27(27)	34(17)
	45-54	34(34)	26(26)	60(30)
	55 and above	48(48)	22(22)	70(35)
Educational Level	Illiterate	68	66	134(67)
	Primary	9	22	31(15.5)
	High School	12	4	16(8)
	Higher Secondary	3	2	5(2.5)
	Graduate & Above	8	6	14(7)
Size of Family Members	1 to 4	40	32	72(36)
	5 to 9	48	55	103(51.5)
	Above 10	12	13	25(12.5)
Major Crops	Paddy	54(56.8)	25(52.1)	79(55.2)
	Wheat	8(8.4)	13(27.1)	21(14.7)
	Cereals	30 (31.6)	10(20.8)	40 (28)
	Pulses	2(2.1)	0	2(1.4)
	Mixed crops	1(1.1)	0	1(0.7)
Agriculture Income	Rs.10000 to Rs 20000	77(81.9)	49(90.7)	126(85.1)
	Rs 20001 to Rs 30000	9(9.6)	2(3.7)	11(7.4)
	Rs 30001 to Rs 40000	8(8.5)	3(5.6)	11(7.4)

Source: *Computed from primary data.*

H_{01}: The average scores of age, type of work activity, no. of family members, land area and major crops do not show a significant difference between Dindori and Annupur districts**.**

A comparative analysis of the Scheduled Tribe MGNREGA beneficiaries of Dindhori and Annupur districts was conducted by conducting f-tests (Table 2). While analysing the table given above it was understood that age, no. of family members, area of land (f = 18.898, p = 0.00, t = 10.831, p = 0.001 and t = 6.240, p = 0.014) all the other variables were unable to reject at 5 % level of significance. Thus, H_{01} was only partly rejected with age, no. of family members, and land area.

Table 2
Mean, S.D. and t-Tests of the Variables

Variables	Dindori		Annupur		t	p-value
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Age	43.6200	9.24502	37.4300	10.82949	18.898	.000*
Type of activity of work	1.9000	.30151	1.9600	.19695	2.776	.097
No. of family members	1.7500	.59246	2.0300	.61060	10.831	.001*
Land area	1.6526	.47866	1.4375	.50133	6.240	.014
Major Crops	1.8211	1.02084	1.6875	.80309	.625	.430

Sources**:** *Computed from primary data*
*Significant at 5% level of significance

H_{02}: Financial Life of the Beneficiaries does not show a difference significantly before and after MGNREGA

Table 3
Paired Sample T-test on Financial Life of the Beneficiaries

Variables		Before MGNREGA		After MGNREGA		t	p value
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Income Sources	Agriculture	1.8150	.76400	3.2350	.81430	30.076	0.000*
	Non- Agriculture	1.8700	.62855	3.2200	.78401	22.176	0.000*

	Live stock Farming	2.1850	.81492	3.3500	.80044	15.830	0.000*
	Daily wages	1.9200	.77239	3.2300	.71390	17.431	0.000*
	Subsidies from government	2.0350	.85288	3.0750	.77614	13.573	0.000*
Family members Migrated	Upto 3 members	1.4650	.60048	2.9550	.79127	24.947	0.000*
Assets Possessed	Movable Properties	1.4550	.58282	3.0000	.82059	22.153	0.000*
	Immovable Properties	1.8150	.63466	3.1600	.66831	24.374	0.000*
Spending Money	Intake good food in all the time	2.1650	2.1650	2.9300	.66883	12.221	0.000*
	Giving more facilities to the family members	1.7650	.70872	2.5900	.53227	14.970	0.000*
	Children Education	2.2900	.79312	2.8450	.52186	9.967	0.000*
	Repayment of Bank Loan	1.8650	.78732	2.5900	.65117	13.675	0.000*
	Medical treatment	2.3450	.88878	3.1800	.83732	11.974	0.000*
Increase Savings	Upto Rs. 2000	1.3850	1.3850	2.6450	.64112	31.304	0.000*

Sources**:** *Computed from Primary Data* * Significant at 5% level of significance

Before and after entering the MGNREGA programme, Paired sample t-tests were performed to evaluate any significant differences in income sources, family members who migrated, assets possessed, spending money, and increased savings (Table 3). Agriculture, non-agriculture, livestock farming, daily wages, government subsidies, movable and immovable properties, intake of good food all the time, giving more facilities to family members, children education, repayment of bank loan, medical treatment, and saving up to Rs. 2,000 (t = 30.076, 22.176, 15.830, 17.431, 13.573, 22.153, 24.374, 12.221, 14.970, 9.967, 13.675, 11.974, 31.304 p = 0.000) all significantly raise. As a result, the null hypotheses presented in H_{01} about significant differences in beneficiaries' financial life before and after the MGNREGA were safely rejected.

Factor Analysis of Impact of MGNREGA on Social Life

The following explanation is based on the presentation of table four, five, six, and table seven below. First, factor analysis by PCA method extracted 5 predominant factors from 25 items that impact MGNREGA on social life scale. The scree plot also suggested a four-factor solution. The Kaiser-Meyer-Oklin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.888, indicating that the samples were adequate to undergo factor analysis. The varimax extractions through PCA are shown in Table 1.3b. The extracted factors were 'Improve Inter-personal Relationship with Society' and 'Gain Social Security, 'Personal status', 'Economic status' and 'Sociatel status' 'which collectively accounted for 92.734% of the total variances. 'Improve Inter-personal Relationship with Society' and 'Gain Social Security' was the first factor reduced using PCA containing 12 items (α = 0.991) with variable #1, #2, #3, #4 to #12, which contributed 43.816% of the variances. The second factor was 'Societal status', which was reduced using the PCA and identified 5 items (α = 0.988) consisting of variables #13, #14, #15, #16 and # 17 and explained 20.016% of the variance.

Next, 'personal status' was the third major factor containing 4 items (α = 0.983) comprised of variables #18, #19, #20 and #21, and explained 17.419% of the variance. Economic status was the

fourth major factor reduced using PCA containing 4 statements (α = 0.971) composed of variables #22, #23, #24 and #25, and explained 11.484% of the variance. 'Reliability tests on the impact of MGNREGA on social life scale is shown in Table 7. The reliability coefficient of all the social life impact scale factors except for the four elements was above the acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.70, as Newman, Lim & Pineda (2013) has suggested. However, since a value as low as 0.5 was also accepted (Carpenter, 2019), no item was deleted to improve the factor reliability level. According to Clark & Watson (1995), Cronbach alpha is an ambiguous internal consistency measurement because it depends on the number of items in a scale and mean item intercorrelations. The alpha value may have been lowered because all factors of the rationale scale comprised only three to four items. All of the factors were kept for further study since their Cronbach's alphas were over 0.5. Thus, all the four social life impact scale factors were retained for further analysis.

Table 4
Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1	43.816	43.816	1	43.816	43.816	1	43.816	43.816
2	0.954	20.016	63.831	0.954	20.016	63.831	0.899	19.119	63.831
3	5.004	17.419	81.25	5.004	17.419	81.25	4.378	15.182	78.714
4	4.355	11.484	92.734	4.355	11.484	92.734	3.821	14.019	92.734
5	2.871	1.026	93.761						
6	0.257	0.947	94.708						
7	0.237	0.792	95.5						
8	0.198	0.587	96.088						
9	0.147	0.551	96.638						
10	0.138	0.474	97.112						
11	0.118	0.393	97.505						

12	0.094	0.377	97.882						
13	0.085	0.34	98.223						
14	0.064	0.255	98.478						
15	0.06	0.242	98.719						
16	0.055	0.22	98.939						
17	0.053	0.212	99.152						
18	0.044	0.174	99.326						
19	0.043	0.172	99.498						
20	0.037	0.147	99.645						
21	0.029	0.118	99.763						
22	0.026	0.105	99.868						
23	0.026	0.102	99.97						
24	0.004	0.015	99.986						
25	0.004	0.014	100						

Source: *Computed from Primary Data*
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 5
Factor loading of the impact of MGNREGA on Social life

Rotated Component Matrix[a]				
	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1: Improve Inter-personal Relationship with Society' and 'Gain Social Security				

Enchange family social status and self-reliance	.981			
Availability of Sufficient food grain	.979			
More interaction with other caste people	.972			
The overall level of satisfactory MGNREGA	.968			
MGNREGA programme is useful	.965			
Improve in infrastructure facilities	.952			
Satisfied with the benefits received from MGNREGA	.951			
Social life involves spending time with others	.950			
Involvement in Panchayat activities	.942			
Involvement in community-related activities	.936			
Poverty alleviation through the better working condition of SHGs	.934			
Improve the decision-making and social participation	.896			
Factor 2: Social Status				
Increase food security		.988		
Reduction in poverty		.986		
Increase labor market earning		.981		
Increase health security		.962		
Improved social status		.956		
Factor 3: Personal Status				
Family educational attainment			.972	
Improved livelihood activities			.971	
Attainment at individual & household level			.968	
Decreased family material hardship			.959	
Factor 4: Economic status				
Increase wealth				.970
Decrease debts				.966
Improved family income				.965
Increase saving habit				.912

Sources: *Computed from primary data*

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations

Table 6
KMO and Bartletts Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.888
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10266.53
	df	300
	Sig.	0

Source: *Computed from primary data*

Table 7
Reliability test of Impact of MGNREGA on Social life

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.911	25

Source: *Computed from primary data*

4. Conclusion

The Indian government has adopted several steps to address the issue of poverty. Poverty alleviation programmes were moderately effective in eliminating poverty, while others had significant problems. On the other hand, many programs failed to provide social security to the rural poor. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is India's major rural development initiative, and its demand-driven and rights-based structural design differs from past programmes. This initiative provides anyone willing to do unskilled manual labour in rural India with a hundred-day legal job guarantee. The rural poor gained the most from this research, and various recommendations were made based on the findings, notably concerning awareness campaigns. First and foremost, it urges policymakers and administrators to create laws and programmes that would enable the widespread implementation of awareness-related training, seminars, and workshops at the grassroots level, involving all job card holders and workers. It was also emphasised that all literature, whether it was reading materials or other display boards such as posters, sign boards, and so on, should be printed, written, and translated in their local dialect/language.

As was also evident, media such as radios, televisions, and newspapers were less efficient in spreading awareness. Because the benefits of these mediums are not distributed evenly and are concentrated only in some locations, they have yet to reach the more remote areas. Display boards and face-to-face interactions are suggested instead. It is also recommended that the authorities create a framework to regulate the practice of performing social audits under the law. MGNREGA is a safety value since it provides risk factor measures for each personal injury produced by a worker's accident. Humanity is vital under the MGNREGA since it gives social and economic security and is a risk factor for workers with suitable working circumstances. As seen by the previous results, MGNREGA is well-planned legislation that has proven to be a powerful tool in the hands of rural low-income families and ensures alternative livelihood choices for tribal poor beneficiaries. The MGNREGA has significantly impacted people's lives. As a rights-based scheme, it includes not only the provision of

100 days of employment but also the development of people's capacities to assert their rights, women's empowerment, sustainable livelihood management, and natural resource management.

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