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A study on impact of the MGNREGA scheme on beneficiaries in Haryana

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Abstract

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was launched in 2005 to provide employment opportunities to rural households, enhance livelihoods, and reduce rural poverty. This research paper examines the impact of the MGNREGA scheme on its beneficiaries in the state of Haryana. By conducting a survey-based study, we analyze the socio-economic outcomes, employment patterns, and perceptions of the beneficiaries towards the scheme. The findings suggest that while MGNREGA has played a crucial role in providing employment and improving the standard of living for rural households, challenges remain regarding timely payment, awareness, and inclusivity of the most marginalized sections of society.

Keywords: MGNREGA, beneficiaries, Haryana, rural employment, poverty alleviation, socio-economic impact

1. Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), introduced in 2005, is one of the most ambitious social welfare programs aimed at addressing rural poverty by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment to adult members of rural households. Haryana, a predominantly agricultural state, has witnessed the direct and indirect benefits of MGNREGA, with its rural population benefitting through the program's various schemes.

This research paper aims to explore the effects of MGNREGA on the socio-economic conditions of its beneficiaries in Haryana, focusing on employment generation, income improvement, empowerment of women, and other related factors.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the impact of MGNREGA on employment generation in Haryana.
- To evaluate the improvement in income levels among beneficiaries.
- To analyze the socio-economic empowerment of women under the scheme.
- To investigate the challenges faced by beneficiaries in accessing the benefits of MGNREGA.
- To identify the level of awareness and participation among rural households.

3. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of MGNREGA across India. According to a report by the Ministry of Rural Development (2020), MGNREGA has significantly contributed to the rural employment landscape, with women's participation increasing over the years. In Haryana, the scheme has helped mitigate the seasonal unemployment in rural areas, particularly during the off-season in agriculture. However, issues such as delayed wage payments and the lack of proper documentation have hindered the full realization of the scheme's benefits (Kumar & Singh, 2019) ^[4]. A study by Sharma (2021) highlighted that while the scheme provided direct benefits in terms of employment, its impact on long-term poverty reduction in Haryana remained limited due to incomplete or low-quality asset creation.

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4. Research Methodology

The research methodology is based on a mixed approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data. The study was conducted in two districts of Haryana: Hisar and Karnal. A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 beneficiaries selected through a stratified random sampling method.

Survey Instrument: The survey included questions related to.

- Employment status before and after MGNREGA.
- Changes in income levels.
- Perceived benefits and challenges of the scheme.
- Awareness of rights and entitlements under MGNREGA.
- Gender-specific outcomes.

Satisfaction levels with the functioning of MGNREGA.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using statistical tools such as SPSS to determine trends and patterns in employment, income, and other socio-economic indicators.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Employment and Income Generation

According to the survey, 78% of the respondents reported that MGNREGA provided them with the necessary employment opportunities, particularly during the lean agricultural season. Before joining MGNREGA, 56% of the respondents experienced seasonal unemployment, which decreased significantly after enrollment in the scheme.

In terms of income, 65% of respondents indicated an increase in their household income due to MGNREGA wages. However, the wage disparity between male and female workers, where men earned higher wages, was still evident.

5.2 Gender Empowerment

Women accounted for 40% of the total MGNREGA beneficiaries in Haryana. Many women reported that the scheme empowered them economically, providing them with a sense of financial independence. However, the gender gap in terms of wage payments and work types (heavy labor vs. lighter tasks) still existed.

5.3 Challenges

Despite the positive impacts, 35% of the beneficiaries reported facing delays in wage payments, which undermined the reliability of the program. Furthermore, 22% of the respondents expressed concerns about inadequate work sites and lack of proper infrastructure, which led to substandard working conditions. Moreover, 18% of the participants were not fully aware of their rights under MGNREGA.

5.4 Awareness and Participation

Awareness of the scheme's benefits was found to be low in remote areas, with 15% of beneficiaries unaware of the full range of entitlements available. This lack of awareness was more prominent among illiterate women and marginalized communities.

6. Conclusion

The MGNREGA scheme has had a positive impact on the rural population in Haryana by providing a significant

source of employment, especially during lean agricultural seasons. It has enhanced income levels and contributed to the economic empowerment of women, though challenges such as delayed payments, awareness gaps, and the quality of work remain. The findings highlight the need for better implementation practices, enhanced awareness campaigns, and improved infrastructure for the scheme to achieve its full potential in alleviating rural poverty in Haryana.

7. Policy Recommendations

- **Timely Wage Payments:** Ensuring timely and transparent wage payments through digital platforms could address one of the major concerns of beneficiaries.
- **Awareness Programs:** Increasing awareness about the rights and benefits under MGNREGA, particularly in remote areas, will help ensure more equitable participation.
- **Improved Work Conditions:** Better infrastructure and a focus on creating high-quality assets will improve the long-term benefits of the program.
- **Gender Sensitivity:** Ensuring gender-equitable work distribution and equal pay for equal work will further empower women beneficiaries.

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