

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND MGNREGA:
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN WORKERS OF
TONK DISTRICT IN RAJASTHAN**

महिला सशक्तिकरण एवं मनरेगा : राजस्थान के टोंक जिले की
महिला श्रमिकों का एक समाजशास्त्रीय अध्ययन

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CHAPTER -7

CONCLUSION OF MGNREGA FOR WOMEN

7.1 Introduction

Present chapter contains the summary, findings, conclusion and suggestions. Since the study was focused on the women employees of MGNREGA thus the conclusions have been drawn from that perspective.

India is a developing economy with high rate of poverty. In India, 21.9% of the populations live below the poverty line. The population below poverty line in urban area is 13.7% while in rural area this is 25.7%. The picture is clear that rural areas of our country are surviving in the acute poverty. Nearly 69% of our populations live in rural areas and 62% labour force engaged in the agricultural activities. Thus rural development is set to be one of the top priorities of our government since from the independence.

In this process of rural development the Central Government headed by the United Progressive Alliance launched world's largest employment scheme titled 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' (NREGA) in 2005, renamed on 2nd October 2009 as '**Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**' (**MGNREGA**). It came in to force in February 2006- initially in 200 districts of India. In financial year 2008-09 it has extended to all the rural districts of India.

MGNREGA is implemented by the ministry of Rural Development of India in order to provide employment to rural population and uplift their standard of living. Raising agricultural productivity and reducing poverty are the fundamental objectives of this act. MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of employment in every financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. In some states like Rajasthan there are 150 days of employment in MGNREGA.

Neelakshi Mann and Varad Pande (2014) "MGNREGA has been a strong pillar on which the foundation of rural prosperity of the last decade has been based. One in four rural households have benefitted from it, with at least 50% beneficiaries being women, scheduled

castes and scheduled tribes. Of course, rural India needs more than just MGNREGA. But the contribution of this programme to the ‘India story’, and to rural revival in the last decade cannot be dismissed cavalierly and without recourse to evidence.”

The prime objective of this study is to find out the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment. The researcher believes that with the special gender sensitive provisions (mentioned in the above chapters) MGNREGA is one of the best drafted social security schemes for women.

Keerthi and Kamala’s (2016) review of MGNREGA’s impacts finds that women have benefitted tangibly and intangibly, by providing broader choices and capabilities, and investments on children’s education, increasing their bargaining power and self confidence. That women benefit from the higher wages is a much welcome development, however women’s economic and social empowerment relates to the extent to which they can access their earnings independently.

The rural areas of our country are lagging behind in the process of development. In this whole picture rural women are the most vulnerable part of our society. Since MGNREGA talks about the empowerment of women thus the present research work solemnly focuses on how MGNREGA influences the process of women empowerment.

7.2 Summary

For the convenience of reading the research work is developed under seven chapters. The chapter wise summary is presented below.

First chapter of the thesis is related with the theoretical and conceptual framework of MGNREGA. All the essential information about MGNREGA described in this chapter with every fine detail. For a successful research, the related literature should be read and reviewed. This helps the researcher to determine the direction of research work. Also it prevents the researcher to work on the already investigated topics. The first chapter also includes the review of literature.

Chapter second contains the Methodology and study area. A basic outline of any work with proper planning is always required to achieve the desired result. In research, this is called research design. In research design, the type of research design is chose according to the nature of research problem. After that methodology is finalized accordingly.

The objectives of the research work are given below:

- To assess the present status of women's participation in MGNREGA.
- To compare their socio – economic status before and after getting work in MGNREGA.
- To compare the quality of life and social status of the women who are employed in MGNREGA and who are unemployed.
- To assess the development among the deprived class of women after starting MGNREGA.
- To examine the changed perspective of society towards the women employee of MGNREGA.
- To assess the role of the political leaders, village leaders and related officials for women empowerment.

Major hypotheses for the present research work are given below:

- By the economic empowerment of women through MGNREGA, the status of women in their family has also uplifted.
- Now women of rural areas are not bound to follow the taboos anymore.
- MGNREGA has played an important role in building up confidence, awareness and leadership quality in women.
- As it believed that women belong to the most vulnerable group affected by the poverty, now this scenario has been changing due to MGNREGA.
- MGNREGA is also helpful to stop migration of women from their native places.
- Women who are employed in MGNREGA are more empowered than the unemployed women of the same village.

The present research conducted in the Tonk district of Rajasthan. The demographic, geographic, historical and economical characteristics of the Tonk district are described in detail. There are six Panchayat Samities in the district, two Gram Panchayats are selected from each

Panchayat Samiti. Thus the field work is done in 12 Gram Panchayats. The research is focused on MGNREGA's role in women empowerment thus there are 192 women selected as respondents. From each gram panchayat 16 women are selected among them 8 are MGNREGA employee and rest 8 are those who never worked in MGNREGA. Present research is based on the responses of 192 rural women, 24 Public Representatives (Sarpanch and Up Sarpanch of Each Gram Panchayat) and 19 Government Officials (Secretary of each Gram Panchayat, Block Development Officer of Each Panchayat Samiti and Chief Executive Officer of Zila Parishad).

An Overview of Study Area of Research:

Table 7.1
Study Area for Research

District	Panchayat Samiti	Village
Tonk	Tonk	Mehandwas
		Naner
	Deoli	Geroli
		Nagar Fort
	Newai	Pahadi
		Chainpura
	Uniyara	Kakod
		Bosariya
	TodaRaisingh	Barwas
		Chann-Basurya
	Malpura	Lava

		Dholi
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Types of data, tools of data collection, techniques of data analysis are the other important things included in this chapter.

Chapter 3 of the thesis presented the socio-economic profile of the household respondents. All the 192 female respondents are classified on the basis of age, caste, literacy level, marital status, occupation etc. Abbreviations are used for the women who work in MGNREGA is M.E. (MGNREGA Employee) and women who don't work in MGNREGA is N.M.E. (Non MGNREGA Employee).

Chapter 4 discusses the relation between empowered women and society. The concept of various dimensions of women empowerment like financial empowerment, personality empowerment, sociological empowerment and political empowerment are given in the chapter. Impacts of women empowerment on society and the perspective of society towards empowered women are some other points included in this part.

Chapter 5 is related with the socio-economic status of deprived women before and after MGNREGA. In all 192 women there are 25 MGNREGA employees who belong to the deprived class/castes. This chapter depicts their before and after condition to assess the role of MGNREGA for the deprived class of society.

Chapter 6 is sectioned in two sub sections. Section first presents the impact of MGNREGA. The Chi-square test of Association and the Chi-square test of Fit are implemented to test the hypotheses. Second section of the chapter analyzes MGNREGA as a scheme and its significance on the process of Women Empowerment.

Summary of the Findings and suggestions are presented in the seventh chapter.

7.3 Major Findings

Important findings emerged out of data analysis presented below.

Findings based Data Analysis

Socio – Economic Perspective

- All the respondents are women. Among them 89.58% are Hindu and 10.41% are Muslims.
- Out of all respondents 18.75% belongs to general caste, 58.33% of other backward castes, 20.83% of schedule castes and 2.08% of schedule tribes. In M.E. only 8% belong to general castes, 66.62% of other backward castes, 20.83% of schedule castes and 5.20% of schedule tribes. This leads to the conclusion that most of the women working in MGNREGA belongs to O.B.C. and S.C. The percentage of general caste is very low. There are two reasons behind this. The families of general castes have pretty sources of income like they have agricultural land, government jobs, business etc. Secondly castes like Rajputs, Brahmins and Vaishya consider themselves bit high in the social structure. They hardly allow their women to work outside as they take it very negatively. While a great number of women belong to O.B.C. and S.C. work in MGNREGA. The percentage of S.T. in total MGNREGA employees is very low because their percentage in population is also very low.
- In all 192 respondents around 45.80% respondents are illiterate, 10.40% are just literate, 8.33% are primary , 20.80% are upper primary, 6.25% are secondary, 4.16% are senior secondary level educated and 4.16% are graduate. This shows that literacy level of rural area is not pleasing. Almost half of the respondents are illiterate.

If we talk about M.E. 70.83% women are illiterate, 8.33% are literate, 4.16% are primary and 16.66% are upper primary level educated.

In N.M.E. only 20.83% are illiterate, 12.50% are literate, 12.50% are primary, 25% are upper primary, 12.50% are secondary, 8.33% are senior secondary level educated and 8.33% are graduates.

The comparative study shows that the literacy level in M.E. is very low in comparison to the other group. The highest level of qualification in M.E. is upper primary while in N.M.E. its graduation. This brings the finding that women, work under MGNREGA, are most likely illiterate or less educated. The women with higher level of qualification don't like to work as labourer.

- The classification of the respondents on the basis of age shows that 31.25% belong to the age group of 21-30, 22.91% belong to the age group of 31-40, 29.16% are from 41-50 and 16.66% belong to the age group of 51-60 years.

In M.E. 20.33% belong to 21-30, 29.16% belong to the 31-40, 29.16% belong to the 41-50 and 20.33 belong to the 51-60 years age group. The data shows that all age groups have almost equal representation in MGNREGA.

The interesting thing came out is that women more than 50 years hardly get work. They had not any source of income. In MGNREGA they got an opportunity to earn their livelihood.

- Out of all respondents 87.50% are married and 12.50% are widow. In M.E. there are 75% women are married and 25% are widow. It shows that unmarried girls and women don't like to work in MGNREGA. Only married and widows are working. The percentage of widow women is 1/4th of the total M.E. draws the conclusion that MGNREGA gives support to these women.
- Around 81.25% respondents come from the joint families and rest 18.70% belong to the nuclear family. If we talk about the M.E. 79.16% respondents have joint family and 20.83% from the nuclear family. In N.M.E. 83.33% respondents have joint and 16.66% respondents have nuclear family. It can be said that in rural areas people still live in the joint family. It is believed that joint family stops the land fragmentation among members so this is still exists in villages. Whatever the reason is but the fact is that people of the rural area live in joint family.
- Classification of the respondents on the basis of the size of family shows that there are 26.04% respondents have a family with 8 or more than 8 members. There are 55.20% respondents who have a family with 6 to 8 members. Families with 2 to 4 members are only 5.20%. Respondents belong to the family with 2 members are just 3.12%. so it can be concluded that rural people not only live in joint family but also they have large size of family with 6 to 10 members.
- Respondents are also classified on the basis of traditional occupation of their family. Nearly 66.60% respondents' traditional occupation is farming, 6.25% associated with business, 2.08% work in cottage industry, 10.40% engaged in service sector and 14.50% work as daily labourer. In M.E. 62.50% respondents' traditional occupation is farming,

4.16% respondents' families engaged in business and same number 4.16% of respondents come from the family associated with cottage industry. 20.16% respondents' traditional occupation is work as daily labourer. They are the poorest among all the respondents. In N.M.E. 70.83% respondents' family occupation is farming, 8.33% is business and 20.83% work in service sector.

This is noteworthy that most of the women who work in MGNREGA come from the family of farmers and daily labourers.

- It was observed out of total 96 M.E. only 29.16% and 12.50% respondents belong to the income group of above 2 lakhs per annum and 1.5 to 2 lakhs per annum respectively. Respondents in the income group of 1 to 1.5 lakhs are 8.33%. Nearly 50% M.E. come from the families with the yearly income of 25000 to 1 lakh.

On the other hand in N.M.E. there are 54.16 % respondents belong to the income group of above 2 lakhs per annum. Thus the study revealed out women working in MGNREGA come from the families with very low income.

- Study of the landholding reveal that 37.50% M.E. are landless while in N.M.E. the percentage of landless is 4.16%. Around 41.66% M.E. have upto 10 beegha, 8.33% have 10-25 beegha and 12.50% have 25-50 beegha landholding.

In N.M.E. 66.66% have upto 10 beegha, 8.33% have 10-25 beegha, 16.66% have 25-50 beegha and 4.16% have more than 50 beegha landholdings.

Comparative analysis bring out the fact a large number of women working in MGNREGA are landless or with very small size of landholding.

- Livestock is considered a valuable asset in rural areas. Out of all 192 respondents 56.25% respondents have livestock and 45.75% have no livestock. In M.E. 91.66% women have livestock while in N.M.E. only 20.83% women have the asset. Out of 88 M.E. having livestock there are 32 women who admitted that they bought goat/cow/buffalo with the help of the income from MGNREGA. They invested their income in livestock to create another source of income. Thus MGNREGA is making our women financially strong.

It is also found that rural women take livestock as a back-up for their family economy.

- The study reveals that out of total samples 58.33% respondents have bricked house, 27.08% have semi bricked house and 14.58% have mud house. It is found that majority of the rural population live in the bricked and semi bricked houses.

- The data related with the respondents' access to the basic amenities are also collected. Out of 192 samples of both group 95.83% respondents have electricity connection, 81.25% have L.P.G. gas connection. The matter of concern is that only 58.33% respondents are benefitted with the supply of drinking water. The supply of drinking water is not satisfactory in the study area.
- The impact of 'Nirmal Bharat Abhiyaan' can be seen in the villages as 85.41% respondents have the access to sanitation facility. It is found that every home has toilet. People have understood the importance of sanitation.

Findings Related with the Deprived Classes/Castes

- There are 25 respondents out of 96 M.E. who belong to deprived class. The researcher tried to find out the significance of MGNREGA for deprived class. Out of all the respondents of deprived class 88% find that the process of job card is difficult, 60% find it long process, 36% complaint about delay in issue and 16% admit there are irregularities and corruption in the process. Thus the finding came out the process of job card is difficult. People working in MGNREGA are mostly illiterate and less educated so they are not comfortable with the registration and documentation process .Respondents also complaint that their job card did not issue on time apart that there is corruption at some extent.
- There is no caste discrimination by officials on the worksite confirmed by all the respondents of deprived class. But the fellow workers believe in the caste discrimination. It is revealed that 76% respondents of deprived class faced caste discrimination at worksite. At the worksite workers are divided in the groups, formed on the basis of caste. This is pathetic for a progressive society.
- It is found that job opportunity in MGNREGA is easier for the deprived class. In the other areas caste politics dominates the employment process while in MGNREGA they get fair chances with extra reservation. Out of 88% respondents from the deprived class find it easy to get job in MGNREGA.
- Out of all respondents of deprived class 72% respondents admit that MGNREGA has very impacts on their lives. After working in MGNREGA they have been included in the system equally like other prominent castes. They empowered financially. All these

factors uplifted their social status. This is one of the prime objectives of MGNREGA to empower the deprived class of society.

- One positive thing came out that 88% respondents of deprived class believe that MGNREGA helped them in getting social acceptance. MGNREGA, financially empower the people which ultimately helps them to get social acceptance with the better status.
- It is found that MGNREGA failed in checking migration. Out of all respondents of deprived class 88% deny that there is any dip in migration because of MGNREGA. Thus the aim of MGNREGA is to stop migration is still to achieve.
- Out of all respondents of deprived class 80% of them admitted that MGNREGA brought social awareness in them. After working in MGNREGA they became more aware about society.
- It is found that MGNREGA is helping the women in realizing their self worth. 76% MGNREGA employees of deprived class felt their self worth after working in MGNREGA. Financially independency helped them to realize their worth.
- Women of deprived class usually do some unclean jobs. It has been tried by the government to give them some other sources of income so that they won't be bound to do unclean jobs. Sadly MGNREGA is not helpful in this. The caste system is deeply rooted in the rural areas. People of every caste don't want to give up their traditional occupation. Thus MGNREGA is not helpful in get rid of unclean jobs.
- MGNREGA succeeded in its aim to financially empower the women. All the respondents of deprived class unanimously accepted that after working in MGNREGA not only their income but also their purchasing power raised.

Some after effects of MGNREGA on all the MGNREGA employees

- Before MGNREGA only 6.25% were fully powerful and 54.17% partially powerful in relation to decision making capability. But after working now 35.42% are fully powerful and 43.75% are partially powerful. Thus MGNREGA enhanced the decision making capability of women.
- After working in MGNREGA 54.17% women started taking the income related decision by themselves while earlier it was just 22.92%. It is found that women not only became

an earning member but they started handling the money matters smartly. This is real financial empowerment.

- It is found that MGNREGA helped the women to get respectable status in their families. Out of all M.E., 76.04% respondents admitted that MGNREGA helped them to achieve higher status in their families.
- The impact of MGNREGA on domestic violence and mental harassment is disappointing. It is found that women don't feel comfortable in discussing their personal matter openly. So the researcher did not get the proper responses regarding this issue.
- MGNREGA helped the women in getting freedom of movement as they got chance to step out from home for working in it. Earlier only 44.79% women had the freedom of movement but after MGNREGA it raised to 70.83%.
- MGNREGA failed to sweep out the 'Purdah System' as around 26% women said they got freedom from this taboo. This is because the women of rural areas don't take it as a barrier or taboo. They take it as a matter of family's prestige and womanly trait.
- It is found that people take MGNREGA safe for women. Earlier only 67.71% women were allowed to work outside but after MGNREGA this percentage increased to 91.67%. Because the working environment is safe.
- Women accepted that MGNREGA helped them to connect with the outer world. They go to bank, they meet government officials, they move in the village. This introduced them with the outer world and new people.
- It is found that 61.46% women feel self confident after working in MGNREGA. This is because they became financially empowered.
- By financial empowerment, MGNREGA brought the self dependency in the women. Around 81.25% women accepted that now they feel self depend.
- One aim of MGNREGA is to evoke the feeling of self esteem in the women for their personality development. But there is no major difference in the situation after working in MGNREGA.
- Earlier when only 39.58% women were interested in politics after MGNREGA it is 79.17%. Thus it is found that MGNREGA brought political awareness in women.

- MGNREGA made the women politically empowered. Women got political awareness and started taking interest in active politics. Now 38.54% women want to contest the election, before MGNREGA it was just 12.50%.

An Assessment of MGNREGA as an Employment Programme

- MGNREGA is found helpful in women empowerment as 100% M.E., 100% P.R., 100% G.O. and 46.87% N.M.E. accepted the same thing.
- All M.E., P.R., G.O. and 31.25% N.M.E. accepted that MGNREGA is a women friendly scheme.
- MGNREGA is found as an easy job opportunity by the women. Out of all M.E. 75% supported the fact.
- The job card related inconvenience is the main flaw of this act. Out of all 67.70% said there job card was not issued on time, 76.04% find it complicated process because most of them are illiterate or least educated and 5.20% complained that there are some kind of corruption in the process. As job cards are issued to the people who are already well off instead of needy people.
- MGNREGA is liked by the employees because of timely wage payment. 86.45% respondents are happy because they always got their payment on time.
- It is found that rules regarding the distance of worksites are followed sincerely. Our 85.41% respondents said that they got work within 2 km from the village. They find the distance is easily manageable.
- Worksite facilities of MGNREGA are not satisfactory. Only 62.50% respondents confirmed about the availability of safe drinking water at worksites. Only 50% respondents confirmed about the shaded rest area. There are only 8.33% respondents who avail the facility of crèche at the worksite. Geroli village of Deoli Panchayat Samiti is the only village where women employees of MGNREGA are provided with the facility of crèche and feeding area.
- Gender and caste base discrimination on the worksite of MGNREGA is very low. Few respondents felt that the employees of the dominant castes sometimes overpower the others but situation is far better than the other worksites.

- Our women didn't feel any kind of physical and financial exploitation at the worksite of MGNREGA. Only 17.70% respondent complained about the mental harassment that should be stopped.
- Out of all employees 85.41% considered the work of MGNREGA is of medium intensity while 14.58% considered it easy work. Thus it can be said that employees are happy with the nature and pattern of work.
- It is found that MGNREGA successfully achieved the aim of ensuring food security and employment generation in rural areas. All the M.E. happily accepted that this act gave them job as well as food security.
- As far as the question of poverty eradication all P.R. and G.O. believe that MGNREGA is successful in poverty eradication. In M.E. 68.75% believe that MGNREGA is helpful in poverty eradication by providing employment.

7.4 Conclusion

Among the lots of appreciating articles and research about MGNREGA there are bundles of articles and editorials can be seen considering the act is complete waste. Well this is the matter of perspective and it is place and situation related. By the analysis of primary data and study of secondary data it is found that MGNREGA is implemented properly in our research area. The targeted population is getting employment with the act. The women are getting empowered as they are becoming financially independent, mentally strong, more aware and getting better status in their surroundings. Thus MGNREGA can be considered as an effective tool of women empowerment.

7.5 Suggestions

1. The payment of MGNREGA is given through bank account. The literacy rate in rural women is very low. They need help of someone as they find it difficult. This dependency is barrier in somewhere in the women empowerment. Thus the special camp should be organized to give them information about banking system and financial literacy.
2. The worksite facilities need to be improved and provided properly. There is a provision of providing safe drinking water, shaded rest area and crèche but moving toilets should be arranged at the worksites.

3. The registration process of job card is very difficult for the people of rural area because of their low literacy level. A help desk should be arranged to assist them to stop the involvement of middlemen. The process should be simplified too.
4. Some complained about corruption in issuing the job cards are also found. An investigating team should be formed to check the eligibility of the job seekers so that only needy people can get the benefits.
5. Mostly the women of rural area are prone to malnutrition. Thus a health check up camp should be held sometimes at the worksite to spread awareness about health and nutrition.
6. Political people often influenced the process and implementation according to their own interests. It should be ensure that there would be no political interference.
7. The scheme is headed by the ministry of rural development that is the part of central government. The role of state government and agencies should be enhanced to make it more effective.
8. At some worksites it has been observed that machines were using in the work under MGNREGA which is not allowed. This happened due to the lack of proper monitoring. Proper monitoring and time to time inspection of the worksites should be done by the related officials.
9. There should be a mandatory rule that every construction work in village like construction of roads, roads repairing, construction of government buildings etc will be done under MGNREGA. This will help in creating more employment.
10. The wage rates should be revised time to time. It will attract the workers.
11. There should be all arrangements of first aid and other essential medical kits to handle any medical emergency at worksite.
12. In our study area there are some hills of Aravali range.because of illegal mining of stones there hills are left without trees. This leads to soil erosion which will change the topography. Thus in such area forestation should be done on the hills to maintain the natural topography.

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