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IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO OJINAHALLI PANCHAYAT IN KOPPAL DISTRICT

Smt. Santoshkumari N[1], Dr Jatappa J[2]
[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Government first Grade College, Koppal*
[2]*Faculty Member, Department of Economics, Government first Grade College, Koppal*

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ABSTRACT
There is inequality and vulnerability of women in all sphere of life. They need to be empowered in all walks of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one, because women constitute half of the population. Empowerment of women is a long and difficult process which is to be promoted with full public support and this could be successful only when those women living at the lower strata who have been suppressed by the male dominated society taking undue advantage of their lack of education and poverty can rise up to claim their rightful place in their own society. The present study is an attempt to measure the impact ofMGNREGA on women empowerment and gender equality and the factors attributed to potential of women empowerment under MGNREGA. The study reveals that MGNREGA can enhance the women empowerment even though the objective of MGNREGA is either women empowerment orgender equality.

INTRODUCTION
The empowerment of rural women is vital for the development of the rural India. Women must empower themselves from bottom so that the government can empower themselves from above through their policies. In the other words "empowering women is a requirement for creating a prosperous nation, when women are empowered, societal stability is assured". The MGNREGA has made positive impact on empowerment and employment of women since its inception. It aims at improving livelihood security by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household especially for women. Women participation has improved significantly and it has given them a sense of independence and security. Women play important role in the growth of the society as well as the country. It is very important to empower women. Empowerment of women refers to the influence of decision making on their own. The word "empower has become equal with the word women".

Gender is the unavoidable push factor for growth and development of a poor nation like India. Though women have been contributing to economic productivity since the dawn of human history, their role has been visualized as an inactive one. Moreover it is observed that women often experience the situation of extreme poverty which is further aggravated by household and social discrimination. In spite of the various provisions in our constitution, the harsh reality is of deprivation and degradation for women. The old system of considering women as their property of men is still deep rooted as an instinct in the society. The changes have taken place in a significant portion of urban women, but their counterparts living in rural areas are only marginally affected by these changes. Women empowerment especially economic empowerment is the only way by which it can be possible to give equal status to women in a male dominated society. To be empowered, women should come forward and realize that they are not second class citizen of the society and at the same time also equally capable with men in all aspects of livelihood. Their empowerment has a huge potential in leading the country to an impressive development. The accomplishment of inclusive growth and overall development is highly dependent on the gender equality and prosperity of women in the rural society.

MGNREGA AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN: AN ANALYSIS
The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a milestone legislation approved by the parliament of India after a successful struggle for employment guarantee legislation. MGNREGA as a flagship programme of Government of India and it was notified on September 7, 2005 in 200 rural districts in its first phase of implementation which took an effect from February 2, 2006.

In 2007–08, an additional 130 rural districts were added under this scheme. The rest districts were notified later under MGNREGA with effect from April 1, 2008. After this period

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MGNREGA has covered the whole country with the exclusion of districts that have a hundred percent urban population. The main purpose of the Act is to enhance livelihood security of the rural household by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. It was fundamentally a programme to provide fundamental income and employment opportunities to poor households in rural areas where opportunities of work did not exist or was very limited. The programme is dissimilar from earlier wage employment programmes in terms of its right based and demand driven approach to public work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature review on women empowerment reflects the findings of various researchers and academicians on MGNREGA through reputed national and international journals, magazines and annual reports are presented by the authors below for easy understanding.

Ramesh & Kumar (2009) in their study also find 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.

Hazarika (2009) examined the impact of MGNREGA on gender empowerment in Morigaon and Bongaigaon district of Assam. The study concluded that almost 70 to 80 percent of sample workers had meaningful income other than unpaid family work during the pre-NREGA. Majority of the worker felt that they are now in better position to fulfill their own requirement without looking at others.

Khera and Nayak (2009) through their sample survey in six Hindi speaking states of North India focuses on impact of NREGA in the lives of women workers. Their study reveals that there is significant benefits reported by women include increased food security and better ability to avoid hazardous work.

Lavanya and Mahima (2013) dogged the scope of women empowerment through MGNREGA in Palakkad. The results of the study showed that MGNREGA had made the women beneficiaries economically independent and it was also concluded that the programme had laid a foundation for self-esteem and independence for women beneficiaries.

K. Borah and R. Bordoloi (2014) in their research paper, MGNREGA and its wages on Daily Waged Workers: A case study of Sonitpur District of Assam 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 discovered that female workers have significant benefits from MGNREGA and also identified some limitations in the implementations of the Act.

Mafruza Sultana and Srinivasa Rao K.S (2016) in this paper, the status of women participation and their performance in MGNREGP in India, particularly in the state of West Bengal, has been discussed. The purpose of this paper is also to study, how women have empowered themselves with an innovative MGNREGP Program, particularly the women from socially and economically marginalised groups which ultimately leads to the sustainable development of society as a whole. Even though globalisation has changed every sphere of life, still issues like gender disparities, risk, vulnerability and challenges faced by women are prevalent in society.

Negi RS (2015) the study is an attempt to assess the impact on MGNREGA has a positive impact on the employment pattern of women. MGNREGA works are primarily focused on land and water resources which include: water harvesting and conservation, soil conservation and protection, irrigation provisioning and improvement, renovation of traditional water bodies, land development and drought proofing.

Jyoti Poonia (2012) this study was highlighted the impact and women participation in MGNREGA. The overall preliminary finding confirms that the NREGA has the potential to stimulate local development if the management and delivery are right; and that women's weak position in the labour market has much helped.

Kabita Borah and Rimjhim Bordoloi (2014) the primary objectives of the research are to study the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment and to identify the obstacles in the path of the implementation of the scheme. Female workers significant benefit reported by the study include – income gains, social empowerment, more say in intra household decision making and creation of community assets etc.

Xavier G and Mari G (2014) the study finds that the MGNREGA increases income and expenditure of the households compared over the pre MGNREGA period and the scheme significantly enhances the social and economic decision making power to women in the men dominated rural society. Hence the system ensures improved standard of living of the vulnerable poor, more specifically among women.

Objectives of that study

This study examines the impact of MGNREGS at the household level, i.e. to study impact of earned incomes of women on household consumption, savings and investments, economic empowerment of women in terms of their control over household resources, social impact on intra-household power relations between men and women and overall well-being of men and

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women in the household in the areas of health, education, nutrition etc.

Impact of MGNREGS on Women in Ojinahalli Pachayath

MGNREGA has potential to enhance women's economic independence through which women empowerment since it is gender sensitive in its formulation. Through the various provisions and guidelines in the Act, the legislation visualizes that women have an equitable access to work, affirmative conditions at work/on sites, equal payment of wages and representation in decision making bodies. To assess the women empowerment and the factors attributed to it, a field study was taken up by selecting only women households in Ojinahalli Village of Koppal Districts of Karnataka during February 2024.The data has been analysed and interpreted in order to know the impact of MGNREGA and participation of women in the selected village.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data is collected through a structured schedule to capture in-depth information on the multiple impacts of MGNREGA from thesample households. Based on the occupational distribution of the households a stratified random sample of 50 women households was drawn for an in-depth study. The Secondary data on various aspects like physical and financial performance viz. The present investigation was carried out in Koppal district of Karnataka during February 2024. Ojinahalli Village of Koppal district was purposively selected for the study because MGNREGA programme was effectively implemented in the district since 2006-2007.

Table 1; District wise Progress under MGNREGA 2023-24 (upto November 2023)

District	Total Cumulative Expenditure (Rs. in Lakhs)	Person days Generated (No)	Cumulative No. of HH Provided Employment (No)
Bagalkote	20391.76	4426710	104658
Ballari	20565.15	5971151	109928
Belagavi	46562.18	9991660	254703
Bengaluru	281.94	63659	1697
Bengaluru Rural	6371.68	1384751	30429
Bidar	19676.93	3896175	103088
Chamaraja Nagara	8149.9	1570883	54297
Chikkaballapura	11933.17	2533830	66457
Chikkamagaluru	11151.24	2221992	53897
Chitradurga	19122.03	4544787	107552
Dakshina Kannada	4602.3	985607	23174
Davanagere	11101.65	2593758	65267
Dharwar	8845.8	1860654	48436
Gadag	13908.28	3448269	92306
Hassan	16393.66	3159510	84246
Haveri	17022.58	3625587	90496
Kalaburagi	20399.71	4665149	159983
Kodagu	1779.61	375265	10502
Kolar	15546.82	3022869	69547
Koppal	29908.4	8182242	182212
Mandya	12420.88	2181594	64629
Mysuru	8770.04	1685238	51239
Raichur	42268.5	10358641	227368
Ramanagara	17565.91	2834366	71761
Shivamogga	9307.49	2087372	79471
Tumakuru	21420.96	4183083	108576
Udupi	3488.84	587492	16254
Uttara Kannada	6173.01	1290250	41050
Vijayanagara	27455.17	6751135	123828
Vijaypura	13525.59	3212907	87874
Yadgir	15045.7	3759814	103991
All District Total	**481156.88**	**107456395**	**2688916**

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Table 1 explained that Progress achieved Under MGNREGA As on November, 2023, an amount of Rs. 4818.19 Crores has been spent and 10.74 crore person days wage employment has been generated through which 26.88 lakh households have been provided employment and MGNREGA is given in Wage employment generated under State Government major programmes is 4.73 Crore Man days employment generated between April 2023 to November 2023.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents on the basis of their Age, Marital Status, Education and Occupation (N=50)

Indicator	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age		
Below 25 years	3	6
26 to 35	12	24
36 to 45	24	48
46 to 55	7	14
56 to 65	4	8
Total	**50**	**100**
Marital Status		
Married	44	88
Unmarried	1	2
Widow	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**
Education		
Illiterate	10	20
Literate	8	16
Primary	9	18
Secondary	8	16
High School	10	20
And above	5	10
Total	**50**	**100**
Occupation		
Farmers	44	88
Agricultural Labour	4	8
Non-Agricultural labour	2	4
Total	**50**	**100**

Source: Field Study

Table 2 presents the distribution of sample households on the basis of their age, marital status, Education and Occupation. As regards the age groups of the participants, the highest participation is from the age group of 36 to 45 years constituting 48 per cent followed by 26-35 years and then by 46-55 age group. Again, married women constitute 88 percent of the total MGNREGS workers, followed by widows/ divorcees/ deserted women, who constitute about 10 percent of the total participants. Based on the educational status of the respondents 20 per cent are illiterates, 20 per cent were completed high school education, 18 per cent were completed primary education, 16 per cent were completed secondary education, another 16 per cent are literates and only 10 per cent of the respondents were completed above high school education. With regard to occupation, 88 per cent of the respondents are small and marginal farmers, 8 per cent of the respondents are agricultural labour and only 4 per cent of the respondents are non-agricultural labour.

Table 3: Income levels of households before and after participation of MGNREGS

Income Level (Per Annum)	Before		After	
	No. of respondents	Percentage	No. of respondents	Percentage
Below 10000	13	26	0	0
10001 to 20000	29	58	0	0
20001 to 30000	7	14	2	4
30001 to 40000	1	2	2	4
40001 to 50000	0	0	10	20
above 50000	0	0	36	72
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**

Source: Field Study

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Changes in Income levels

MGNREGA enables the households especially the women households to enhance their income levels with the provisions in the Act like equal wages, equitable access to work, specific working hours, work site facilities, timely wages etc. Table 3 presents the annual income levels of the sample households before and after participation of MGNREGS. There is a substantial increase in the income levels of the households after participation of MGNREGA in the village. It is evident from the table 6, the households below Rs. 10000/- and Rs. 10001-20000 per annum before MGNREGA were 26 per cent and 58 per cent respectively where the households for the same income levels after participation of MGNREGA were zero per cent. The households between Rs. 20001-30000 and Rs. 30001 to 40000 per annum before MGNREGA was 14 per cent and 2 per cent respectively whereas the households for the same income levels after participation of MGNREGA were 4 per cent each. The households belong to Rs. 40001 to 50000 and above Rs. 50000 per annum before MGNREGA were zero per cent each against the households for the same income levels after participation of MGNREGA were 20 per cent and 72 per cent.

Table 4: Share of total income spent towards domesticconsumption before and after participation of MGNREGS

Item	Before (%)	After (%)
Food	69	34
Clothing	11	17
Education	14	26
Health	5	11
Household asset	1	12
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Field Study

MGNREGA has made considerable impact on consumption pattern of the beneficiaries. They have started using the increased income (basically earned from MGNREGA employment) towards the purchase of better clothes, providing quality education to their children, better health and purchase household assets. Table 4 presents the share of total income spent by the sample households towards domestic consumption before and after participation of MGNREGS. The proportion of total income spent towards food before MGNREGA stands at 69 per cent and it is decreased to 34 per cent after participation of MGNREGA. There is a considerable change in the consumption pattern towards education, health and household assets which stands 14 per cent, 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively before participation of MGNREGA and it is increased to 26 per cent, 11 per cent and 12 per cent respectively after participation of MGNREGA.

Table 5: Saving pattern of the households before andafter participation of MGNREGS

Mode ofsaving	Before		After	
	No. of respondents	Percentage	No. of respondents	Percentage
Bank account	20	40	10	20
Insurance	1	2	12	34
Chits	19	38	5	10
SHGS	10	20	10	20
Government schemes	0	0	13	36
Total	**50**	**100**	**50**	**100**

Source: Field Study

Changes in Savings Pattern

Increased income through participation in MGNREGS induced the sample households to save more for the future and also makes them to change their pattern of savings. After participation in MGNREGS the households became aware of basic financial literacy and they started savings on modern financial assets like insurance and also started savings in various Government social security schemes. Table 5 presents the savings pattern of the sample households before and after participation of MGNREGS. The preferential modes of saving of the households before participation of MGNREGS are Bank Account (40 per cent), Chits (38 per cent) and SHGs (20 per cent) and after participation of MGNREGS, their preferential modes of savings has been changed towards modern financial assets like insurance (34 per cent) and various Government social security schemes (36 per cent) etc.

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Changes in Decision making of women on domesticspending and savings

Table 6: Decision making of women on spending and savings before and after MGNREGS (Percentage)

Sl.No	Item	Before			After		
		Self	Husband	Both	Self	Husband	Both
1	Food	44	20	36	88	2	10
2	Clothing	14	66	20	46	4	50
3	Children'sEducation	30	48	22	52	6	42
4	Health	50	18	32	78	10	12
5	Householdassets	18	72	10	50	14	36
6	Transport	20	58	22	54	8	38
7	Social andreligious events	34	36	30	94	0	6
8	Savings	44	40	16	92	2	6

Source: Field Study

Decision making by women on spending and savings at their homes is one of the important indicators of women empowerment. Keeping this in view, the sample households were enquired about the degree of change in decision making towards spending on domestic goods like food, clothing, children's education, health, household assets, transport, social and religious events and savings.Table 6 presents the proportion of change in decision making of women on spending towards domestic goods and savings before and after participation of MGNREGS. It reveals that there is a positive change in the decision making on spending for various domestic goods and savings which were earlier dominated by male members in the family. This may be due to contribution made by the women to the family income through wages obtained in MGNREGA.

Table 7: Factors attributed to potential of women Empowerment under MGNREGA

Factors related to Socio Economic and Political Empowerment of Women	Yes(Weight 2)	To Some extent (Weight 1)	No (Weight 0)	Total Score	Weight Average Score
Better and financial discipline	34	14	2	82	1.64
Freedom to spend and save the earnings	34	9	7	77	1.54
Freedom from money lenders and bankers	29	17	4	75	1.5
Total Score for 3 factors on Economic Empowerment				**234**	**1.56**
Deciding on purchase of household goods	40	4	6	84	1.68
Freedom to decide on children's education	78	12	5	168	3.36
Raising voice against injustice	17	22	9	56	1.12
Total Score for 3 factors on Social Empowerment				**308**	**2.05**
Expression opinion meetings/discussions	22	21	7	65	1.3
Election campaigning/contesting in elections	20	25	5	65	1.3
Public speaking ability	12	30	8	54	1.08
Total Score for 3 factors on Political Empowerment				**184**	**1.23**
Grand Total Score for the 9 Social, Economic and Political factors				**726**	**1.61**

Source: Field Study

Potential of Women Empowerment

For assessing the women empowerment potential of MGNREGA by means of a field study, the following factors have been considered: (i) Better Financial planning and discipline, (ii) Freedom to spend and save the earnings,(iii) Freedom from moneylenders and bankers, (iv) Deciding on

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purchase of household goods, (v) Freedom to decide on children's education, (vi) Raising voice against injustice, (vii) Expressing opinion in meetings/discussions,(viii) Election campaigning / contesting in elections, (ix)Public speaking ability.

Suitable weights are attached to the responses of the respondents viz. the 50 women workers under study as follows: 'Yes' Weight 2, 'To Some Extent' Weight 1, and 'No' Weight 0. The factors leading to women empowerment can be categorized based on their empowerment potential into three major groups viz. High Empowerment (Average Score above 1.33), ModerateEmpowerment (Average Score between 0.67 to 1.33) andLow Empowerment (Average Score below 0.67).

From Table 7, it is noted that MGNREGA has got an appreciably high level of potential for women empowerment. This is evidences from the high average score of 1.61 considering all the nine factors together. Besides, it is noted that the social empowerment potentialis the highest compared to economic and social factors. This may be attributed to very high score for individual factors like freedom to decide on children's education (3.36) and deciding on purchase of household goods (1.68). However, it is to be noted that the average score for the factor of raising voice against injustice is stands moderate (1.12).With respect to economic empowerment too, the overall potential for empowerment is high at the level of 1.56; and among the three individual factors in thisgroup the factor 'better financial discipline' has got a very high score of 1.64, followed by another factor 'Freedom tospend and save the earnings' with a very high score of 1.54 while the third factor 'freedom from money lenders' has also got a high score of 1.50. With respect to political empowerment, the average score for the three factors put together (1.23) as well as the individual scores for the three different factors are quite moderate. In short, it may be pointed out that MGNREGA implementation has given riseto very high level of social empowerment, high level of economic empowerment and quite moderate level of political empowerment of rural women.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that MGNREGA can enhance the women empowerment even though the objective of MGNREGA is neither women empowerment nor Gender equality. This is because MGNREGA does provide women(both engaged in the labour market or working as housewives) an opportunity to earn (minimum) wages andincomes; to mobilize to develop collective strength (in the form of SHGs or in any other forms); and to participate in village level institutions like Gram Sabhas, Vigilance Committees, Social audits etc. The study has shown that by accessing these opportunities, women MGNREGA and women's empowerment tend to influence intra-household relationships in their favour and tend to acquire improved bargaining within and outside the home. Though these developments do break some barriers to gender equality, they do not remove all the barriers to women's empowerment. That is, MGNREGA by and of itself cannot achieve complete gender equalities in the economy and the society. This is because empowerment of women, basically, is brought about not by one programme but by an enabling macro environment, including enablingmacroeconomic environment.

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