

WOMEN LABOUR PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA: A CASE STUDY



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ABSTRACT

This is the most important reason for this. This "invisibility" of women's job is a key contributing factor to the fact that employment of women is not treated as a distinct activity in research or the creation of policy. The socially constructed gender ideologies contribute to this invisibility by creating a hierarchy in men's and women's roles, with men operating in the public domain, more specifically the market, and women being confined to the private domain, namely the household. This renders women's unpaid work "invisible," which ultimately leads to women's status being lower than that of men. The primary objective of the research done on FLFP has been to determine the factors that contribute to FLFP and its impact on a variety of issues, such as the amelioration of gender inequalities, the promotion of women's autonomy and independence, the protection of women and children, and other similar topics.

Keywords: Women, Participation, Mgnrega

INTRODUCTION

Since women make up almost half of the world's population, it is reasonable to assume that their contributions to the economic growth of any nation are on par with those of males, who account for the other half of the world's populace. On the other hand, the contribution of women to the advancement of the economy is grossly underappreciated and undervalued largely owing

to the non-recognition and non-monetization of the majority of the tasks that they conduct and their resultant absence from statistical enumeration as a result of this exclusion from the enumeration process. The most important reason for this is the flaws in the definition and concept of national income, which takes into account only remunerative or paid work and does not take into account the unremunerative or unpaid activities that women perform, especially in poor subsistence economies. This is the most important reason for this. This "invisibility" of women's job is a key contributing factor to the fact that employment of women is not treated as a distinct activity in research or the creation of policy. The socially constructed gender ideologies contribute to this invisibility by creating a hierarchy in men's and women's roles, with men operating in the public domain, more specifically the market, and women being confined to the private domain, namely the household. This renders women's unpaid work "invisible," which ultimately leads to women's status being lower than that of men. The devaluation of the contributions that women make may be seen as a symptom of the numerous forms of discrimination that women experience in virtually every area of life, albeit to various degrees depending on factors such as nationality, culture, religion, and so on. According to the Human Development Report from 1995, women's contributions to human development are a much greater amount than the advantages they obtain from it. This disparity in benefits may be ascribed to women's unequal standing in society (UNDP, 1995, p. 29). In addition to improving women's economic standing, the engagement of women in economic activities, also known as female labor force participation (FLFP), plays a key role in the elimination of such imbalances. Participation of women in the labor force has been proven to have a positive correlation with enhanced well-being of women. This is due to the fact that it helps to minimize gender inequality and ultimately results in empowerment. It leads to an improvement in the well-being of the family as a whole, particularly the well-being of the female children, as a result of the decrease in inequality that occurs within the home. It is possible that, in the long run, this will lead to reduced levels of poverty as well as a slowdown in the rate of population increase. Therefore, the engagement of women in the labor field makes a substantial contribution to both human and economic growth. However, a topic that receives less attention is the possibility that women's advancement toward equality may be stymied if they work in low-paying jobs, particularly in times of economic hardship, because this type of work adds to the drudgery they already face rather than helping them break free of it. This is a problem that is especially likely to occur if women

The primary objective of the research done on FLFP has been to determine the factors that contribute to FLFP and its impact on a variety of issues, such as the amelioration of gender inequalities, the promotion of women's autonomy and independence, the protection of women and children, and other similar topics. However, women's experiences in the labor market are significantly distinct from those of men's in that it is more diverse and complex, and factors as diverse as demographic, social, cultural, religious, reproductive, and personal factors, in addition to economic factors (Srivastava and Srivastava, 2010), play a more crucial role in determining FLFP vis-à-vis men, for whom labor force participation is determined predominantly by economic factors. This is in contrast to men, for whom labor force participation is determined predominantly by economic factors

Agriculture is still the principal employment for the majority of people living in most developing nations throughout the world, including India, which is one of these countries. Women's participation in various activities related to crop production, animal husbandry, horticulture, floriculture, fisheries, agroforestry, and other agriculturally-related fields is well-known to be an essential component of their roles in agriculture and the industries that support it in rural areas. This is a well-known fact. Women play a predominate role in the agricultural system of any country as cultivators, laborers, and business owners. Women perform almost all agricultural activities, from crop production to animal husbandry, including ploughing and hoeing also in some cases. This is in addition to the domestic chores, which are solely the responsibility of women. Although the level and nature of their involvement varies between and within regions as well as across different farming systems, academics are in agreement that women have contributed much more to agriculture than has been given credit for. This is despite the fact that the degree and nature of their involvement varies between and within regions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In her article titled "Employment Guarantee and Women Empowerment in Rural India," Navjyoti Naidu (2010) discusses the effects that MG NREGS had in its early years by looking at the data from the research. She stated that not only has MGNREGA improved the economic status of women, but it has also increased their awareness level along with their participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and gram sabha as well. She added that this is due to the fact that MGNREGA has improved the economic status of women. It is noteworthy that more and more women are becoming visible as participants in the MG NREGA.

MG NREGA SAMEEKSHA (2012) noted that with a national participation rate of 47%, data shows that women are engaging in the Scheme more actively than in other works. This is supported by the fact that the Scheme has a national participation rate of 47%. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG NREGA) provides a significant employment opportunity for women who, in the absence of this program, would have remained unemployed or underemployed. However, there is a substantial amount of diversity between states in terms of the engagement of women, which calls for more research and analysis. In the academic year 2011–12, Kerala had the greatest level of female engagement, at 93%, while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir had low levels of female participation, at 18% and 17% respectively.

Only thirty percent of the women in the sample remembered earning cash income from a source other than MGNREGA, according to the findings of a study carried out by Dreze and Khera (2011) in ten sample districts spread across the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Fifty percent of all the women who participated in the survey provided the response that, in the absence of MGNREGA, they either would have worked at home or continued to be jobless.

Ghosh. J. (2009) made the observation that the proportion of women working on projects funded by MGNREGA is much higher than the proportion of women working in the informal wage labor market in every state. Women are taking part in the Scheme in a considerably more active capacity than they were previously documented as having done in any other sort of job.

In a study that Dheeraja and Rao (2010) conducted on the effect of MG NREGS on gender relations in 102 districts across 27 States, they discovered that gender relations in favor of women increased in the post-MG NREGS period. This was the result of the study's conclusion that MG NREGS had a positive impact on gender relations. Women who participated in the MG NREGS saw improvements in their levels of self-esteem, self-image, and confidence as a result of their involvement. Developments in gender relations among the members of the SHGs were helped along by the MG NREGS, which also helped to cement these changes. After the MGNREGS program was put into place, women experienced an improvement in their scores on the Gender Relation Index (GRI), which measures social, economic, and political factors at the household and community levels.

Hazarika, (2009) conducted a study in the state of Assam with the primary objective of determining the impact of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme on women's empowerment and gender inequality and identifying major constraints, if any, on their access to productive employment opportunities through the employment guarantee programme. The study was carried out in the state of Assam. It was observed that the gendered distribution of assets and the resultant fallout on women substantially limits national efforts at overcoming poverty. This indicates the urgent need to address issues relating to persistent gender discrimination and factors affecting women's ownership and control of assets. Furthermore, it was observed that the gendered distribution of assets and the resultant fallout on women.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The underemployed and surplus labor force in the rural sector have been a key focus of planning efforts for rural development in India. These efforts have been directed toward the productive absorption of this labor force. There have been many different programs that have been designed to generate employment opportunities. Some examples of these programs include the Employment guarantee scheme that was implemented in Maharashtra in 1970, the Food for work program, the National Rural employment program, the Rural Landless Employees Guarantee Program, and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. Between the years 1952 and 2005, India carried out a number of different programs. However, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 (MGNREGA) stands out as a pioneering and innovative piece of legislation due to the fact that it is demand driven and guarantees each household 100 days of employment each year. As a result, it is essential to conduct an investigation into the effect that the plan will have on the number of jobs, income, and other types of infrastructure that will be created in the rural areas' communities. As a result, it is very necessary to do research on the topic of the "Impact of MGNREGA on the Standard of Living of the Rural Poor."

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To have an understanding of the socioeconomic circumstances of the respondents in the study area;
2. To have an understanding of the current status of the rights and other entitlements assured by the scheme to the rural masses;

3. To have an understanding of the effect of the scheme on providing employment in the study area;

DATA ANALYSIS

The MGNREGA is the government of India's initiative that receives the greatest publicity and is implemented in the most locations. Every household that offers to help with the manual labor will be offered a minimum of one hundred days of guaranteed employment throughout the course of one calendar year.

The following are some of the most important aspects of this Act:

- adult members of a rural household who are willing to do unskilled manual work may apply for registration in writing to the local Gram Panchayat;
- the Gram Panchayat will issue a job card bearing the photograph of all adult members of the household with no cost and the job card will be issued within 15 days of the application;
- the job card holder may submit a written application for employment to the Gram Pan
- Employment opportunities should typically be available within a 5-kilometer radius of the hamlet. If the work is provided further than 5 kilometers away, an additional 10% of the wages are to be paid in order to cover the additional costs of transportation and living;
- wages are to be paid in accordance with the Minimum Wages Act of 1948, and men and women will receive equal wages;
- at least one-third of the beneficiaries must be women who have registered for and requested work under the scheme;
- work site facilities like a crèche, drinking water, and shade must be provided;
- In light of this, the chapter analyzes both the respondent's perspective on the scheme and the extent to which they reaped the benefits of participating in the plan.

Table 1 Classification of Respondents According To Gender And Community In The Study Area

S. No	Blocks	Sex				Community					
		Male	Female	Total	%	SC	BC	MBC	Others	Total	%
1.	Alanganallur	50	100	150	33.3	65	80	5	0	150	33.3
2.	Chellampatty	20	130	150	33.3	82	41	26	1	150	33.3
3.	Usilampatty	27	123	150	33.4	63	51	36	0	150	33.4
Total		97 (22)	353 (78)	450 (100)	100 (46.78)	210 (38)	172 (15)	67 (0.22)	1	450	100

Source: Primary Data

Note: The figures in the parenthesis represent percentage.

The gender distribution of the respondents in the research region is presented in Table 4.1, along with their classification by community. In accordance with the recommendation that there should be 30.0 percent of women employed, there are 78.0 percent female respondents and 22.0 percent male respondents in this particular research region. Chellampatty has the highest proportion of female residents, at 86.0 percent, followed by Usilampatty, at 82.0 percent, and Allanganallur, at 66.0 percent, according to the block wise research. The provision of an equal salary to women as mandated by this is largely responsible for the very high rate of female involvement.

It is extremely evident that men and women are paid an equal rate in MGNREGA employment since the Act has stipulated that it should be done. This is a really major change that, for the

first time, gives women the impression that they are on equal footing. MGNREGA made it possible for female employees to leave their jobs with local landlords who paid lower wages to women than they did to males (Arora 2013). The NREGA was not first enacted with the purpose of empowering women, nor is it one of its primary goals now. On the other hand, provisions such as priority for women in the ratio of one third of the total workforce, equal remuneration, creches for children, provisions of labor within a radius of 5 kilometers from the house, lack of supervisors and contractor's, and flexibility have been beneficial for women (Singh 2012). According to the findings of the community analysis conducted in the region under investigation, 47.0% of the respondents are members of a disadvantaged community, also known as SC. (Bipul De 2013) also revealed in his study that 52.0% of the respondents in their study region are members of the SC or ST group.

There is evidence to show that the MGNREGA is successful as a self-targeting program, with high levels of participation from marginalized groups like the SCs and STs. The percentage of work performed by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs) and STs (STs) under MGNREGA has consistently remained high at the national level, ranging from 40–50 percent in each year of the Scheme's operation. Only in the previous fiscal year, 2011–12, SCs and STs received 84 crore out of 209 crore total person-days of employment, which is a percentage of 40 percent of the total person-days of work. In both instances, the participation rate is higher than the proportion of the entire population that each accounts for (Mihir Shah, 2012). In addition, the data shows that 38.0% of the population belongs to the Backward Class, 15.0% of the population belongs to the Most Backward Class, and less than 1% of the population belongs to any other group. This demonstrates that people who are at the absolute bottom of the social hierarchy are more likely to participate in manual labor than those who are in the highest social category.

According to the findings of the research shown above, about one third of the respondents are female. Due to the fact that women prefer to work in the local region and at local jobs, equal earnings, and promised weekly payment, women are stepping forward freely to join MGNREGA. According to the findings of the community study, 47.0 percent of the respondents come from a SC, whereas 38.0 percent come from a Backward Community.

Table 2 Classification Of The Respondents According To Their Age In The Study Area

WOMEN LABOUR PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA: A CASE STUDY

S. No	Blocks	Age of the Respondents				Total
		Upto 29	30-44	45-59	60-above	
1.	Alanganallur	4	59	48	39	150
2.	Chellampatty	7	65	50	28	150
3.	Usilampatty	10	43	46	51	150
	Total	21(5)	167(37)	144(32)	118(26)	450(100)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage.

The classification of the respondents in the research area according to their ages is presented in table 4.2. The total number of respondents was 450, and of those, 332 people were in the active age group of 14 to 59, also known as the working age population. 26.0% of the total number of responders are older than 60 years of age. This demonstrates that more than one quarter (26.0%) of the sample consists of individuals who are older than the population that is considered to be of working age according to the Census of India (1996, 2001 & 2011). The elderly people have been encouraged to join in this plan as a result of the local availability of the jobs and the guaranteed wages. This demonstrates that the Government of India has to consider adjusting the range of the population that is considered to be in the working age demographic. This is because of improvements made to medical facilities as well as an overall rise in the Indian population's life expectancy. It has been determined that 37 percent of the people who participated in the survey are in the age bracket of 30 to 40, and it is noteworthy to note that 26 percent of the people who took part in the survey are in the age bracket of 60 years or older.

Table 3 Classification Of Respondents According To Gender And Age In The Study Area

WOMEN LABOUR PARTICIPATION IN MGNREGA: A CASE STUDY

S. No	Sex	Age				Total	%
		Upto 29	30-44	45-59	60 and above		
1	Male	3 (3)	29 (30)	26 (40)	39 (40)	97 (100)	22
2	Female	18 (5)	138 (39)	118 (34)	79 (22)	353 (100)	78
	Total	21 (5)	167 (37)	144 (32)	118 (26)	450 (100)	100

Source: Primary data

Note: Figures in the parentheses represent percentage.

The gender and age distributions of the respondents in the study region are broken down and explained in table 4.3 below. The working age and the gender that is preferred for physically demanding employment are both determined by significant criteria, the most important of which are age and gender. Twenty-two percent of the total respondents are male, while the rest seventy-eight percent are females who contribute more than the specified standards of the NREGA Act of 2005. Senior persons made up two fifths (40%) of the male population, whereas only one fifth (22%) of the female population was considered to be in the same age bracket (i.e. 60 and over).

In addition, it should be mentioned that 37.0 percent of the respondents (male 30.0 percent, female 39.0 percent) were in the age group of 30-44 years, while 32.0 percent of the respondents (27.0 percent males and 34.0 percent females) belong to the age category of 45-59 years, and the remaining few (male 3.0 percent and female 5.0 percent) belong to the younger age of below 30 years. Because there are few alternative job opportunities, the majority of elderly people live in rural regions, where they are responsible for the agricultural work that pays the least. Women who reside in rural locations have a greater chance of continuing to work for their entire lives, in contrast to women who live in metropolitan areas. The pressures of the economy force elderly rural women to continue working so they can provide for their families. The labor done by elderly women not only contributes to the alleviation of poverty within families, but it is also essential to the distribution of agricultural products within metropolitan areas and helps India remain globally competitive (Pennyvera – Sanso, 2012). It is noteworthy to notice that 40.0% of the male participants are in the age range

of over sixty, while only 28.0% of the female participants are in the same age group. It is possible to draw the conclusion that the program has been beneficial to elderly people and those living alone in remote locations.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of our investigation, the vast majority of agricultural work carried out by women in the rural hill areas of West Bengal is undertaken as unpaid domestic labor and is not compensated for their efforts. This is especially the case with regard to the agriculture industry. Only 14.5% of the women who were of working age and participated in the survey reported actively participating in paid employment, despite the fact that 71.9% of the women were employed in paid as well as unpaid jobs. The reason for this discrepancy is that the women who were of working age and participated in the survey were more likely to be employed in paid jobs. This highlights the important role that women play in the rural hill economy through their participation in unpaid agricultural jobs and activities associated with those jobs. This contributes greatly to the financial and food security of households, making it clear that women play a significant role in the rural hill economy. According to the findings of the research, the age of women does not have a direct bearing on the degree to which they participate in various economic activities in a manner that is directly related to that age (paid as well as unpaid work).

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