



**IMPACT OF LOCATION ON THE PERCEPTION OF RURAL PEOPLE
FOR OVERALL RURAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER MNREGA WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KHARGONE AND BARWANI DISTRICTS
OF MADHYA PRADESH**

***Shradha Mishra**

Research Scholar

****Dr. Suresh Patidar**

Reader, IIPS, DAVV, Indore

ABSTRACT

India is predominantly an agrarian country. Nearly 80% of India's population lives in villages. Hence it becomes important that proportionate amount of attention and funds be spent for betterment of the rural people. But inspite of their being in majority, they have been lagging behind in the fields of education, civic amenities, medical facilities and economic well being. So the Government of India realize the need of improvement of condition of rural people. Many programmes and projects for their upliftment have been started. In order to overcome all these problems especially rural unemployment, Government of India enacted The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on 25th August 2005. This act has been renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. The Act guarantees 100 days of employment in each financial year to rural adult members of the family who are willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wages. This largest employment providing program in the world enjoys budget allocation of Rs. 38,500 crore in year 2016-17. It aims to achieve twin objective of rural development and employment. This research work helps to review the perception of rural people towards performance of MNREGA in

Khargone and Barwani districts of Madhya Pradesh. This research is based on primary data which is collected through a questionnaire and data analysis was done by using t test.

Keywords: Rural Development, Rural Employment, location, MNREGA, T test

Introduction

The people of India live mostly in rural areas or it is in the heart of villages that the nation lives. But the rural mass faces various challenges like poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of infrastructure etc. After independence, the government launched a number of schemes for economic and social well being of rural people. In 2005, the government of India passed Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to eradicate poverty and generate employment in villages. This scheme is demand driven and decentralized. It generates employment by undertaking projects related to water conservation, drought proofing, land development and rural connectivity. With time MNREGA has also appeared as an important work opportunity for women who would have otherwise remained unemployed or underemployed. Today this scheme not only contributes in income and livelihood security but also work for gender and social empowerment, sustainable asset creation and increasing agricultural productivity. For smooth functioning of the world's largest scheme in terms of beneficiaries regular monitoring and updation is demanded. The current research is an attempt to study and evaluate the impact of MNREGA on rural development of India. The study investigates various aspects of development indicators viz. agri-economic development, employment and empowerment, rural infrastructure, migration reduction and irrigation. These indicators have been taken as basic parameters to study the impact on rural households.

Literature Review

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a social welfare programme which encompasses the whole of rural India. It spends a huge budget as compared to any other public welfare programme. Aiyer and Samji (2006) emphasized on strengthening of social audit in order to improve the effectiveness of MNREGA. They also suggested community score card in which citizens play the central role in monitoring the provision of public services. Chakraborty (2007) observed that under utilization of the total available funds particularly in poorer states is hindering the effectiveness of the scheme. According to his study, along with the smooth flow of funds for implementation of projects in accordance with the demand, capacity

building at the village level, right to information to enable social audits effectively, accountability of functionaries and an effective grievance redressal mechanism assume critical importance.

Jacob (2008) observed that the MGNREGA programme has immense potential to improve the gap between urban and rural India and lead to rural development in terms of basic infrastructure like roads, in terms of agricultural productivity from irrigation works. It also provides a stable income for workers; their income graph would be much smoother with the MGNREGA bolstering their earnings in the 100 days between agricultural seasons. The efforts made by the Villupuram district (of Tamil Nadu) authorities though efficient functioning of MGNREGA, although there still might be some irregularities in the implementation should be used as a model in other regions to help realize the potential of this Act.

Gaiha et al (2009) tried to construct an intuitive measure of the performance of the MGNREGA. Their paper focused on whether excess demand responds to poverty and whether recent hikes in MGNREGA wages were inflationary. Their analysis confirms responsiveness of excess demand to poverty. They observed that apprehensions expressed about the inflationary potential of hikes in MGNREGA wages were confirmed. The higher MGNREGA wages were likely to undermine self-selection of the poor in the programme. They suggested in order to realise the poverty reducing potential of this scheme, a policy imperative was to ensure a speedier matching of demand and supply in districts that were highly poverty prone, as also to avoid the trade-offs between poverty reduction and inflation.

Kareemulla et al (2010) evaluated the scheme in four states, viz., Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra with a specific focus on desirability, quality and durability of assets created and the programme's effects on the livelihood generation of beneficiaries. The study found that a wide variety of works were taken up under the scheme in the study districts including works on soil and water conservation structures and rural roads, which matched the requirements of the people but the quality and maintenance of assets need more attention in the coming years so that investment made would not go futile. They concluded that scheme was achieving its primary objective of employment generation but the assets created were generally seen as a by-product in the study areas.

Anderson et al (2013) suggest the role of Unique Identification (UID) in the functioning of MGNREGA and how this new system can bring better efficiency in its functioning and they also suggest to use control group methodology for testing the efficiency of UID system in improving MGNREGA. The new UID system will enable payments to go through the banking system. Bank accounts for MGNREGA workers will be linked to the unique biometric id. As a result, the actual transfer of payments will immediately reach the hands of who it is intended for. This should drastically reduce the inherent corruption in the current system and increase the amounts and reliability of payments to the workers.

Khan (2015) in his paper highlighted the performance of MGNREGA while implementing the world's largest employment generating programme in Dharwad district of Karnataka state. The scheme helped in sustainable development of Dharwad district through infrastructure development. Lot of focus has been for water and soil conservation, in that more emphasis was given for Water conservation and water harvesting and Drought Proofing which are essential for upliftment of the rural poor. Geetika (2015) in her research identified that India's MGNREGA is the only Act which gives its rural people such a right and that too in the era of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). It has a vital role to play because of its humane approach. It serves as an effective safety net for the unemployed especially during famine and drought. It has enabled them with sufficient purchasing power and they are able to at least to supports their basic necessity i.e. food. The Act has confined the rural poor to their areas and stopped migration to the cities. It is not only giving rural livelihoods but also involving them in other non-agricultural work. This has helped in handling disguised workers. Employment in other non-agricultural work will also improve the rural infrastructure i.e. rural asset building. It will ultimately lead to sustainable development.

Objectives

1. To study the effect of location on overall perception of rural people towards MNREGA.
2. To study the effect of location on the perception of rural people towards agri-economic development under MNREGA.
3. To study the effect of location on the perception of rural people towards employment and empowerment under MNREGA.
4. To study the effect of location on the perception of rural people towards rural infrastructure under MNREGA.

5. To study the effect of location on the perception of rural people towards migration reduction under MNREGA.
6. To study the effect of location on the perception of rural people towards irrigation under MNREGA.

Hypotheses

Ho1 There will be no significant effect of location on overall perception of rural people towards MNREGA.

Ho2 There will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards agri-economic development under MNREGA.

Ho3 There will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards employment and empowerment under MNREGA.

Ho4 There will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards rural infrastructure under MNREGA.

Ho5 There will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards migration reduction under MNREGA.

Ho6 There will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards irrigation under MNREGA.

Methodology

In this study, the population consists of the rural people living in Khargone and Barwani districts of Madhya Pradesh. A sample of total 400 respondents is taken for the study. 202 respondents were taken from different villages of Khargone district and 198 respondents were taken from the villages of Barwani district. The scale was designed on the basis of the literature review. A panel of experts from administration, statistics, economics, human resource and researchers were also consulted for the development of scale. It was based on Likert Scale. Against each statement, a five point scale was given: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree. The data was entered in SPSS 16.0 version (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for analysis. T test was used to determine if the two sets of data are significantly different from each other.

Results and Findings

a) Effect of location on the overall perception of rural people towards Rural Development

Table 1. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Overall Perception towards Rural Development

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 213.95 | 211.07 |
| Std. Deviation | 5.723 | 13.487 |
| Std. Error Mean | .403 | .959 |
| t-value | 2.78* | |

*significant at 0.01 level

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value of 2.78 is significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 398. It means that there is a significant difference between perception of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts in terms of overall perception towards MNREGA. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on overall perception of rural people towards MNREGA.” is rejected.

Further, the overall perception mean score of Khargone district is 213.95 which is significantly higher than that of Barwani district (211.07). Hence, it may be concluded that Khargone district had better overall perception than Barwani district towards MNREGA.

b) Effect of location on the perception of rural people towards Agri-Economic Development

Table 2. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Perception towards Agri-Economic Development

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 64.8861 | 62.9949 |
| Std. Deviation | 2.38192 | 6.65044 |
| Std. Error Mean | .16759 | .47263 |
| t-value | 3.80* | |

*significant at 0.01 level

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value of 3.80 is significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 398. It means that there is a significant difference between perception of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts in terms of agri-economic development under MNREGA. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards agri-economic development under MNREGA” is rejected.

Further, the agri-economic development mean score of Khargone district is 64.8861 which is significantly higher than that of Barwani district (62.9949). Hence, it may be concluded that respondents belonging to Khargone district had better perception towards agri-economic development than respondents belonging to Barwani district under MNREGA.

c) Effect of location on the perception of rural people towards Employment and Empowerment

Table 3. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Perception towards Employment and Empowerment

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 61.8168 | 59.5000 |
| Std. Deviation | 3.52830 | 4.16506 |
| Std. Error Mean | .24825 | .29600 |
| t-value | 6.007* | |

*significant at 0.01 level

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value of 6.007 is significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 398. It means that there is a significant difference between perception of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts in terms of employment and empowerment under MNREGA. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards employment and empowerment under MNREGA” is rejected.

Further, the employment and empowerment mean score of Khargone district is 61.8168 which is significantly higher than that of Barwani district (59.5000). Hence, it may be concluded that respondents belonging to Khargone district had better perception towards employment and empowerment than respondents belonging to Barwani district under MNREGA.

d) Effect of location on the perception of rural people towards Rural Infrastructure

Table 4. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Perception towards Rural Infrastructure

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 35.5396 | 37.5455 |
| Std. Deviation | 3.08114 | 4.30151 |
| Std. Error Mean | .21679 | .30570 |
| t-value | 5.370* | |

*significant at 0.01 level

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value of 5.370 is significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 398. It means that there is a significant difference between perception of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts in terms of rural infrastructure under MNREGA. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards rural infrastructure under MNREGA” is rejected.

Further, the rural infrastructure mean score of Khargone district is 35.5396 which is significantly lower than that of Barwani district (37.5455). Hence, it may be concluded that respondents belonging to Barwani district had better perception towards rural infrastructure than respondents belonging to Khargone district under MNREGA.

e) Effect of location on the perception of rural people towards Migration Reduction

Table 5. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Perception towards Migration Reduction

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|-----------------|----------|---------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 33.7426 | 33.6010 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.80741 | 2.30810 |
| Std. Error Mean | .12717 | .16403 |
| t-value | 0.684 | |

The t value of 0.684 is not significant. It means that mean perception score of migration reduction of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts do not differ significantly from each other. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards migration reduction under MNREGA” is not rejected.

Hence, it may be concluded that respondents from both Khargone and Barwani districts have similar perception towards migration reduction under MNREGA.

f) Effect of location on the perception of rural people towards Irrigation

Table 6. Mean, SD, SE and t-value for Perception towards Irrigation

| Location | Khargone | Barwani |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| N | 202 | 198 |
| Mean | 17.9604 | 17.4242 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.08284 | 1.29105 |
| Std. Error Mean | .07619 | .09175 |
| t-value | 4.50* | |

*significant at 0.01 level

From the above table, it can be seen that the t-value of 4.50 is significant at 0.01 level with degree of freedom equal to 398. It means that there is a significant difference between perception of respondents belonging to Khargone and Barwani districts in terms of irrigation under MNREGA. In the light of this the null hypothesis namely, “there will be no significant effect of location on the perception of rural people towards irrigation under MNREGA” is rejected.

Further, the irrigation mean score of Khargone district is 17.9604 which is significantly higher than that of Barwani district (17.4242). Hence, it may be concluded that respondents belonging to Khargone district had better perception towards irrigation than respondents belonging to Barwani district under MNREGA.

Conclusion

A difference in perception of rural people depending on their location is observed. The rural people of Khargone district were found more enthusiastic and have strong perception towards agri-economic development, employment and empowerment, irrigation and overall perception. They actively participate in giving suggestions for the improvement of MNREGA works and also work actively in the fields. The workers of MNREGA at grass root level such as gram

panchayat members, sarpanch worked efficiently in planning and implementation of MNREGA works. The rural people of Barwani district were found comparatively less enthusiastic but were more concerned about developing a better rural infrastructure in the villages. They opined that a better rural infrastructure will bring more employment opportunities to the villages. Most of the population living in these two districts belongs to schedule caste and schedule tribe. These rural people were either illiterate or have primary education only. MNREGA not only provided employment to this labor class population but also upgraded their social well being. A satisfactory women participation in MNREGA works is also observed leaving a positive impact on their socio-economic status. The rural people of both the districts see MNREGA as an effective scheme to fight against poverty and unemployment. The unskilled and illiterate people got employment and a fair compensation near their residence only resulting in reduced migration. Also, it gave a regular pay to them.

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