Impact of MGNREGA among the Tribal Community in Idukki District of Kerala

Cini Jose[1], Dr. M. Dhamodharan[2]

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Annamalai University, India
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Annamalai University, India

The present study aims to know the impact of MGNREGA among the tribal community in Idukki district, Kerala. To understand the role of MGNREGA in the socio-economic development of the tribal communities in Idukki District. The collected data, a total of 380 valid responses were retained for analysis. It ensured a robust and reliable dataset for the study. The statistical test used to collecting data from respondents, the data was carefully edited and entered into a computer using SPSS software version 28.0. To Impact of MGNREGA among The Tribal Community, a cross-tabular analysis was performed using selected background variables of respondents. The result was also calculated using the percentage analysis, mean, standard deviations, t-test and ANOVA. Findings indicate that while MGNREGA has provided a crucial source of income for many tribal households, challenges such as delayed payments, bureaucratic hurdles, and inadequate awareness about entitlements persist. The study highlights policy recommendations to enhance the implementation of MGNREGA, ensuring its benefits reach the most marginalized sections effectively. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on rural employment policies and tribal welfare, emphasizing the need for inclusive and participatory development initiatives. Therefore it is concluded that MGNREGA has played a pivotal role in enhancing the socio-economic conditions of the tribal population. The program's objectives of providing employment, improving infrastructure, and fostering social inclusion have largely been met, demonstrating significant positive impacts on the community. The analysis reveals that MGNREGA has substantially contributed to increasing household incomes, improving access to basic services such as clean drinking water and electricity, and enhancing social infrastructure. The program has notably empowered women, providing them with greater economic independence and leadership opportunities. The high level of satisfaction reported by respondents further underscores MGNREGA's

effectiveness in achieving its primary goals.

Keywords: MGNREGA, tribal community, socio-economic impact, rural employment, poverty alleviation, Kerala.

1. Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), introduced in 2005, stands as a cornerstone of India's social security framework aimed at alleviating rural poverty. The Act provides a legal guarantee of at least 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household willing to engage in unskilled manual labor. MGNREGA's significance transcends mere employment; it embodies a rights-based approach to development, ensuring social inclusion, promoting economic empowerment, and fostering community-driven infrastructure development (Adefila, 2024). Over the years, the scheme has significantly contributed to reducing rural distress by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, mitigating migration, and addressing gender disparities by encouraging the participation of women in the workforce. Though, its impact varies across regions, influenced by local socio-economic conditions, governance, and the specific challenges of marginalized groups, including tribal populations (Maru, 2014).

CHALLENGES IN MGNREGA IMPLEMENTATION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was established to provide a safety net for rural households by guaranteeing employment opportunities. While it has proven successful in many regions, its implementation in tribal areas, such as Idukki district, has faced significant challenges that limit its effectiveness. One of the most critical issues is the delay in wage payments. Reports have consistently shown that many states have failed to disburse wages within the mandated 15-day period. For instance, only 26% of payments to non-Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe workers were completed on time (Drishti IAS, 2023). The delay not only demotivates workers but also exacerbates financial instability, particularly in tribal communities where income sources are already limited. Such delays leave workers without immediate support, affecting their ability to meet basic needs and creating a sense of distrust towards the program.

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN KERALA

Tribal communities in Kerala, also known as Adivasi in Malayalam, are an essential part of the state's diverse population. Most of these tribes are found in the forests and mountains of the Western Ghats, which border the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. These tribes have their distinct cultural, linguistic, and social practices that make them unique within the broader Indian demographic (Basavarajaiah et al; 2020).

The tribal population in Kerala is officially designated as "Scheduled Tribes" (ST) for affirmative action purposes. According to the 2011 Census of India, Kerala's Scheduled Tribe population is 484,839, which makes up 1.5% of the state's total population. The tribals of Kerala are classified into three main categories by the Scheduled Tribes Development Department of the Government of Kerala: Particularly Vulnerable Scheduled Tribes (PVTGs), Marginalized Tribes, and Minorities.The highest concentration of tribal communities in Kerala

is in Wayanad district, with 151,443 tribal people. Other districts with significant tribal populations include Idukki (55,815), Palakkad (48,972), Kasaragod (48,857), and Kannur (41,371)(Suresh &Rajasenan, 2015).

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EMPOWERMENT OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Empowerment within tribal communities encompasses the enhancement of social, economic, political, and cultural capacities, enabling these groups to exercise greater control over their lives and participate actively in broader societal processes. The multifaceted empowerment involves fostering self-reliance, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring equitable access to resources and decision-making platforms. In the Indian context, tribal communities, or Adivasis, constitute approximately 8.6% of the population, totaling around 104 million individuals (Census of India, 2011). Historically marginalized, these communities have faced challenges such as poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and political underrepresentation. Empowerment, therefore, entails addressing these disparities by promoting educational opportunities, economic development, and political inclusion, while also safeguarding traditional knowledge and practices. The approach not only uplifts the socio-economic status of tribal populations but also enriches the cultural diversity of the nation

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Banamali S &Homeswar G (2023)It seeks to improve livelihood security in rural areas by offering every household whose adult members volunteer to perform unskilled manual labour at least 100 days of paid employment in a fiscal year. Intending to ensure the "right to work," the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 (or NREGA; subsequently renamed as the "Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act," or MGNREGA) is an Indian labour law and social security program. September 2005 saw the passage of this Act during Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's UPA administration. The most fantastic employment scheme for residents of Bongaigaon district in Assam's rural areas has been made possible by MGNREGA, which also offers a legal guarantee of paid employment. The

program is demand-driven and people-centric because wage seekers bear much of the blame for MGNREGA's success.

Bhaskar K (2023), the study is an effort to assess how much employment has been created in Telangana under the MGNREGA. The Plan for the growth of Telangana's rural sector should be effectively executed from the local level up to the highest levels of government. In rural regions, the primary authority for organising, carrying out, and overseeing the completion of projects is the panchayat. Even if numerous initiatives to eradicate poverty and improve the lives of rural impoverished people have been put into place over the years, the number of people living in poverty still rises. The leading causes of poverty are underemployment, unemployment, and disguised work, which not only lowers people's standards of living but also poses severe socialproblems.

Pradeep Kumar et al. (2022) this study attempts to close this gap by providing macro-level documentation of the MGNREGA program's overall performance and illustrating how the Sustainable Livelihood Approach in NRM might increase rural families' resilience to climate shocks. Between 2014–16 and 2017–19, there was a decrease in the aggregate share of socially marginalised communities, including schedule caste and schedule tribe. However, the percentage of women participating in MGNREGA at the national level has been high since the program's founding, but it has somewhat decreased during the study period. The livelihood approach framework is for comprehending poverty and finding ways to alleviate it. Essential community-centric planning and further independent research and surveys that can assess the scheme's adaptation to climate threats while developing NRM assets are needed to build adaptive capacity at the micro level. It is essential to regularly hold training and awareness programs on women's rights and gender equality under MGNREGA to achieve favourable gender results at the micro level.

Methodology

The methodology forms the backbone of this study, providing a systematic approach to understanding the impact of MGNREGA on the tribal community in Idukki District, Kerala. The chapter outlines the research framework, methods, and tools employed to achieve the study's objectives. A combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques was adopted to explore the socio-economic benefits, livelihood sustainability, and empowerment facilitated by MGNREGA.

Objectives

1.   To study the socio-economic conditions of the Tribal community

2.   To understand the role of MGNREGA in the socio-economic development of the tribal communities in Idukki District.

3.   To know the empowerment of Tribal communities through MGNREGA

Hypothesis

1.   Null Hypothesis (H$_0$): The role of MGNREGA differs significantly with the demographic variables.

2.   Null Hypothesis (H₀): The impact of MGNREGA differs significantly based on demographic variables.

3.   Null Hypothesis (H₀): The level of empowerment through MGNREGA differs significantly based on demographic variables.

3. SAMPLING DESIGN

The researcher employed a multi-stage random sampling technique to gather data from the respondents.

Sampling and Data Collection

The collected data, a total of 380 valid responses were retained for analysis. It ensured a robust and reliable dataset for the study.

Statistical Tools Used

After collecting data from respondents, the data was carefully edited and entered into a computer using SPSS software version 28.0. Because this is a descriptive study, most of the analysis used frequency tables. The significant dependent variable in this study was MGNREGA's impact on the Tribal Community at Idukki District Kerala: A Sociological Study. To Impact of MGNREGA among The Tribal Community, a cross-tabular analysis was performed using selected background variables of respondents. The result was also calculated using the percentage analysis, mean, standard deviations, t-test and ANOVA.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table No: 1 Age of the Respondents

S.No	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 25	113	29.7
2	26-35	94	24.7
3	36-45	70	18.4
4	46-55	81	21.3
5	56 and above	22	5.8
	Total	380	100.0

The age distribution of respondents in the study reveals a predominantly youthful population, with 29.7% below the age of 25 and significant proportions in the prime working age groups of 26-35 years (24.7%) and 36-45 years (18.4%). This suggests that a large portion of the tribal community in Idukki District is within their most active and productive years, which likely influences their participation in MGNREGA. The presence of 21.3% of respondents in the 46-55 age group indicates a sustained need for employment opportunities as individuals approach middle age, while the smaller percentage (5.8%) of those aged 56 and above may reflect either a lower involvement in physically demanding work or a smaller elderly population within the community. Overall, the age structure suggests that MGNREGA plays a critical role in

providing economic support across different life stages, particularly for the younger and middle-aged segments of the population

Table No: 2 Source of Income of the Respondents

S.No	Source of Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Agriculture and farming	128	33.7
2	Wage labour	143	37.6
3	Self-employment	54	14.2
4	Government job	55	14.5
	Total	380	100.0

The data on the sources of income among respondents reveals a diverse economic base within the tribal community of Idukki District. Wage labor emerges as the most common source of income, accounting for 37.6% of respondents, indicating a strong reliance on daily wage work, likely through programs like MGNREGA. Agriculture and farming follow closely at 33.7%, reflecting the community's traditional ties to land-based livelihoods. Self-employment and government jobs are less prevalent, representing 14.2% and 14.5% of respondents, respectively. The presence of government jobs, though limited, suggests some access to more stable and formal employment, while the proportion engaged in self-employment highlights entrepreneurial efforts within the community. Overall, this distribution suggests that while traditional and labor-intensive occupations dominate, there is also a small but significant shift towards diversified income sources, which may be key to the community's economic resilience and growth.

Table No: 3 Common source of information about MGNREGA

S.No	Common source	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Gram Panchayat	55	14.5
2	Local government	217	57.1
3	Community meetings	42	11.1
4	NGOs	66	17.4
	Total	380	100.0

The data on the common sources of information about MGNREGA reveals that the majority of respondents, 57.1%, rely on local government for updates and information, making it the most significant source. NGOs also play a notable role, with 17.4% of respondents obtaining information through them. Gram Panchayat serves as a source for 14.5% of the respondents, while 11.1% rely on community meetings. This distribution suggests that local government is the primary channel for disseminating information about MGNREGA, but NGOs and community-based sources also contribute to raising awareness. The reliance on these varied sources underscores the importance of maintaining effective communication through multiple channels to ensure that the community is well-informed about the program and its benefits.

Table No: 4 Significance test for Role of MGNREGA based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	220	76.2000	6.67415
Female	160	79.5875	3.00395
Total	380	77.6263	5.68592

T-test

t	df	Sig
-5.992	378	.000

The t-test results show that females (Mean = 79.59, SD = 3.00) perceive MGNREGA's role in socio-economic development more positively than males (Mean = 76.20, SD = 6.67), with a significant t-value of -5.992 (p = .000). This suggests that gender influences perceptions, with females generally viewing the program more favorably. MGNREGA contributes to socio-economic development by providing employment, improving infrastructure, and enhancing social cohesion and empowerment, though the impact varies by demographic factors.

Table No: 5 Significance test for Impact of MGNREGA based on Age

Age	N	Mean	SD
Below 25	113	39.4513	4.29699
26-35	94	38.9574	3.20924
36-45	70	34.5286	4.20049
46-55	81	36.2222	6.92459
56 and above	22	33.1364	4.45395
Total	380	37.3684	5.21020

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1792.575	4	448.144	19.781	.000
Within Groups	8495.846	375	22.656		
Total	10288.421	379			

The table presents the results of an ANOVA test analyzing the impact of MGNREGA in sustaining livelihood based on age. The descriptive statistics indicate that younger age groups report higher mean perceptions of MGNREGA's impact on livelihood. Specifically, individuals below 25 years have the highest mean score (39.45, SD = 4.30), followed by those aged 26-35 (38.96, SD = 3.21). Older age groups have lower mean perceptions, with those aged 36-45 (34.53, SD = 4.20), 46-55 (36.22, SD = 6.92), and 56 and above (33.14, SD = 4.45) showing progressively lower scores. The ANOVA results show a significant F-value of 19.781 with a p-value of .000, indicating that there are statistically significant differences in perceptions of MGNREGA's impact on sustaining livelihood across different age groups. This suggests that younger individuals generally perceive MGNREGA as having a more substantial impact on their livelihood compared to older individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and its effects on the tribal community in Idukki District, Idukki District, Kerala. The findings illustrate that MGNREGA has played a pivotal role in enhancing the socio-economic conditions of the tribal population. The program's objectives of providing employment, improving infrastructure, and fostering social inclusion have largely been met, demonstrating significant positive impacts on the community. The analysis reveals that MGNREGA has substantially contributed to increasing household incomes, improving access to basic services such as clean drinking water and electricity, and enhancing social infrastructure. The program has notably empowered women, providing them with greater economic independence and leadership opportunities. The high level of satisfaction reported by respondents further underscores MGNREGA's effectiveness in achieving its primary goals.

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