

Socio-Economic Determinants of Unskilled workers of MGNREGS: Some Evidence from Puducherry, India

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India as its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance play a pivotal role in eradicating rural poverty. The present study analyses the socio-economic determinants of unskilled workers of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). Primary data were collected from 1300 beneficiaries of MGNREGS using Systematic Random Sampling Technique of all the villages in Villianur Panchayat of Puducherry Region using interview schedule. The study revealed that females have the highest mean rank in socio economic determinants with regard to family size, waiting days, monthly expenditure, distance, other expenditure and land and mobile phone holding. The unskilled workers who belong to age group of '40-60 years' have higher participation in MGNREGS than those of other age categories and the unskilled workers belong to educational category "others" have higher participation in MGNREGS than the unskilled workers who belong to other categories of educational level. Hence, the households who wish to work and applied for work have better participation in MGNREGS.

Key Words: Socio-economic Determinants, Unskilled Unskilled workers, MGNREGA, MGNREGS

JEL classification: I38, O12, R28, Z18

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas of India by providing at least one

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hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA has become a powerful instrument for inclusive growth in rural India through its impact on social protection, livelihood security and democratic governance (**Prakash, 2013**). The objectives of the Act include:

- Ensuring social protection for the most vulnerable people living in rural India by providing employment opportunities
- Strengthening decentralised, participatory planning through convergence of various anti-poverty and livelihoods initiatives
- Deepening democracy at the grass-roots by strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and
- Effecting greater transparency and accountability in governance.

Key processes in the implementation of MGNREGA

- ❖ Adult members of rural households submit their name, age and address with photo to the Gram Panchayat.
- ❖ The Gram Panchayat registers households after making enquiry and issues a job card which contains the details of adult members enrolled and his / her photo.
- ❖ The employment will be provided within a radius of 5 kilometres and if it is above 5 kilometres extra wage will be paid.
- ❖ If employment under the Scheme is not provided within fifteen days of receipt of the application, daily unemployment allowance will be paid to the applicant.

Review of Literature

Khera and Nandini (2009), in a research study titled “*Women unskilled workers and perceptions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India*” reported the survey results and revealed that female (labour workforce) participation rate is significant in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and it is the least in Uttar Pradesh which was broadly in line with the official data. They stated that employment opportunities for women in private labour market are limited, irregular, poorly paid and can even be hazardous.

Roy and Singh (2010), in a research study titled “*Impact of NREGA on Empowerment of the Beneficiaries in West Bengal*” assessed the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of the beneficiaries in two districts viz., Burdwan and Dakshin Dinajpur of West Bengal. Significant positive changes were found in the level of aspiration, self-confidence and self-reliance of the respondents after commencement of the Scheme. However, after working under MGNREGA, 75.5 per cent of them were found to be under low empowerment category and 24.5 per cent of them were found to be under medium empowerment category. So a positive impact of the Scheme was observed on the empowerment of its beneficiaries in the study area.

Kar (2013), in a research study titled “*Empowerment of Women through MGNREGS: Issues and Challenges*” attempted to study whether there was inequality and vulnerability of women in all spheres of life. Without the active participation of women, establishment of a new social order may not be a successful one, because women constitute almost half of the population in India. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which entitles rural households to 100 days of casual employment on public works at the statutory minimum wage, contains special provisions to ensure full participation of women.

Azhagaiah and Radhika (2014), in a research paper titled “*Impact of MGNREGA on the Economic Well – being of Unskilled workers: Evidence from Puducherry Region*” stated that the haunting problem of unemployment was not confined to any particular class, segment or society as massive unemployment exists among educated, well-trained and skilled people as well as among semi-skilled and unskilled labourers, landless labourers, small and marginal farmers etc. The study examined the economic empowerment and well being of the rural poor and revealed that there was a significant increase in the welfare of the family for both male and female unskilled workers in respect of spending more for family, children’s education and enables them to save in bank / post office after started working under MGNREGA.

For the study, 150 unskilled workers employed under MGNREGS were selected from the Srivilliputtur block by convenient sampling method. Mann Whitney U test was used to study the association between the gender and satisfaction with working conditions of MGNREGS and the gender and level of satisfaction about MGNREGS. The study found that there was no significant

association between the gender and satisfaction with the working conditions and level of satisfaction on MGNREGS; there was no significant association between the age and awareness about MGNREGS.

Research Gap

The success of the MGNREGA depends on mobilisation of the poor, strong Panchayat Raj Institution system with proper institutional support, ensuring timely availability of funds etc. Previous studies showed low level of awareness among the unskilled workers and their inability to demand the work.. Hence, the present study is a maiden attempt to study the socio-economic determinants viz., size of family, monthly expenditure, other expenditure, distance, wait days, land and mobile of unskilled workers with regard to the work under MGNREGS.

Research Questions

- What is the difference in the gender and socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA in the chosen area?
- What is the difference in the age, educational status and socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA in the chosen area?

Objectives of the Study

- ✓ To study the progress of households that are provided employment, average number of person days of works per household and total expenditure on MGNREGS in India for the period from 2006-07 to 2012-13.
- ✓ To study the socio-demographic profile i.e. gender, age and educational status of unskilled workers of MGNREGA in the chosen area.
- ✓ To analyze the difference in gender and socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA in the chosen area.
- ✓ To analyze the difference in age, educational status and socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA in the chosen area.

Hypotheses Development for the Study

- H_0^1 = There is no significant difference between gender categories in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA.
- H_0^2 = There is no significant difference between age groups in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA.
- H_0^3 = There is no significant difference between educational categories in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA.

Profile of the Study Area

The study is conducted in Villianur Panchayat, covered under Villianur block of Pondicherry District. The Pondicherry District Villianur block is selected for the study. The selected Villianur block consists of two village panchayats viz., Villianur and Mannadipet.

Table 1
 Total Number of Villages and Unskilled workers Population (Gender-wise) under MGNREGA in Villianur Panchayat of Pondicherry District

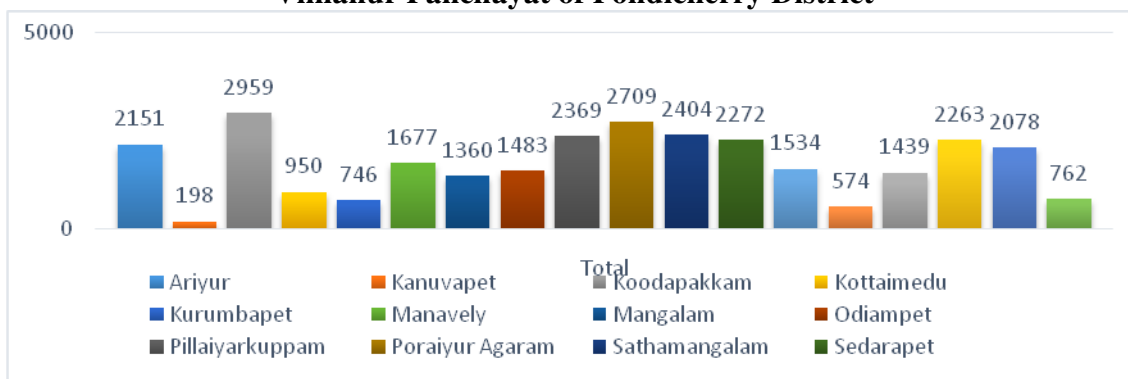
Sl. No.	Villages	Male	Female	Total
1.	Ariyur	920 (42.77)	1231 (57.23)	2151
2.	Kanuvapet	65 (32.83)	133 (67.17)	198
3.	Koodapakkam	1436 (48.53)	1523 (51.47)	2959
4.	Kottaimedu	404 (42.53)	546 (57.47)	950
5.	Kurumbapet	364 (48.79)	382 (51.21)	746
6.	Manavelly	806 (48.06)	871 (51.94)	1677
7.	Mangalam	649 (47.72)	711 (52.28)	1360
8.	Odiampet	698 (47.07)	785 (52.93)	1483
9.	Pillaiyarkuppam	1082 (45.67)	1287 (54.33)	2369
10.	Poraiyur Agaram	1317 (48.62)	1392 (51.38)	2709

11.	Sathamangalam	1182 (49.17)	1222 (50.83)	2404
12.	Sedarapet	1117 (49.16)	1155 (50.84)	2272
13.	Sivaranthagam	729 (47.52)	805 (52.48)	1534
14.	Sulthanpet	263 (45.82)	311 (54.18)	574
15.	Thirukanchi	683 (47.46)	756 (52.54)	1439
16.	Thondamanatham	1117 (49.36)	1146 (50.64)	2263
17.	Uruvaiyar	1049 (50.48)	1029 (49.52)	2078
18.	Villianur	337 (44.23)	425 (55.77)	762
Total		14218 (47.51)	15710 (52.49)	29928

Source: Compiled data collected from NREGA website.
 Figures in parentheses denote percentage to total

Table 1 and Figure 1 show the total number of villages and unskilled workers population under MGNREGA in Villianur Panchayat. It comprises 18 villages with overall population of 29928. When compared to male, female population of unskilled workers is more in Villianur Panchayat.

Figure – 1
Total Number of Villages and Unskilled workers Population under MGNREGA in Villianur Panchayat of Pondicherry District



Source: Compiled data collected from NREGA website

Sample Frame

The sample size of the study has been designed using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{((1.96)^2 * 29928 * .50 * (1-.50))}{[(0.025)^2 * (29928-1)] + [(1.96)^2 * .50 * (1-.50)]}$$

Where

$$\chi^2 = 1.96$$

$$N = 29928$$

$$P = .50$$

$$ME = 0.0025 (2.5\%)$$

$$n = 1,451.$$

The sample size of the study is 1,451 at confidence level of 95%, margin of error at 2.5%.

Sampling Technique

Systematic Random Sampling Technique :Systematic sampling technique is a statistical method involving the selection of elements from an ordered sampling frame. The most common form of systematic sampling is an equal-probability method, in which every k^{th} element in the frame is selected.

The formula for calculating the sample interval (SI) is:

$$SI = \frac{29928}{1451}$$

Where k is the sample interval (SI), N is the population, and n is the sample size. In this case N is 29,928 and n is 1,451, and the sample interval (SI) is (approximately) ≈ 20.62 . Using this procedure, each element in the population has a known and equal probability of selection. This makes systematic sampling functionally similar to simple random sampling. The ultimate sample respondents are selected adopting *Systematic Random Sampling Technique* where the sample interval (SI) = $29928 / 1451 = 20.62 =$ (approximately) ≈ 21 . The first sample respondent is selected by simple random sampling technique i.e. by lottery method, and every other sample respondents are selected adopting the systematic random sampling technique, keeping the **SI** as 21 i. e. the first sample respondent being 3rd in the population list, the second sample respondent is $(3+21) = 24^{\text{th}}$ in the list and so on.

Research Methods

Variables Used for Analysis

Table 2
Variables used for Analysis

Variables	Description
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Predictor Variables	
Size of the family (<i>FAMSIZE</i>)	Number of members in the family
Monthly Expenditure (<i>MONEXP</i>)	Monthly Expenditure of the Household through MGNREGS
Wait days (<i>WAITDAYS</i>)	Maximum Number of days waited by the households for payment of wage
Other Expenditure (<i>OTHEREXP</i>)	Number of Days of Employment in a year other than MGNREGS
Distance	Distance (in kms. from residence to work place)
Land	Land holding of the household after employed under MGNREGS
Mobile	Mobile phone holding of the household after employed under MGNREGS

Source: Primary data

Table 2 shows the variables used for analysis. It shows that predictor variables viz., size of the family, monthly expenditure, wait days, other expenditure, distance, owning of land and mobile phones to analyse the determinants of participation of households in MGNREGS.

Research methods used for Analysis

In order to study the key indicators of MGNREGA for the period from 2006-07 to 2012-13 viz., number of households provided employment, average number of person days of work per household and total expenditure annual growth rate and compound annual growth rate are calculated. Further Mann Whitney U – test and Kruskal – Wallis test are also used. The following are the research tools and formulas used for analysis:

- **Annual Growth Rate**

The formula for calculating Annual Growth Rate (AGR) is:

$$AGR = \frac{\text{Ending Value} - \text{Beginning Value}}{\text{Beginning Value}} * 100$$

- **Compound Annual Growth Rate**

The formula for calculating Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) is:

$$CAGR = \left(\frac{\text{Ending Value}}{\text{Beginning Value}} \right)^{\left(\frac{1}{\# \text{ of years}} \right)} - 1$$

- **Mann Whitney U - Test:** The Mann Whitney U – test is a non-parametric test which is used to analyse the difference between the medians of two data sets. The test can be used to compare any two data sets that are not normally distributed. Formula for calculating Mann Whitney U-test is:

$$U_1 = n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_1(n_1 + 1)}{2} - R_1$$

$$U_2 = n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_2(n_2 + 1)}{2} - R_2$$

Where n_1 is the sample size for sample 1, n_2 is the sample size for sample 2 and R_1 is the sum of the ranks in sample 1, R_2 is the sum of the ranks in sample 2.

- **Kruskal - Wallis Test:** The Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis of variance by ranks (named after William Kruskal and W. Allen Wallis, 1952) is a non-parametric method for testing whether samples originate from the same distribution. It is used for comparing more than two samples that are independent, or not related.

$$H = \frac{12}{N(N + 1)} \left(\frac{R_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{R_2^2}{n_2} + \frac{R_3^2}{n_3} + \dots + \frac{R_k^2}{n_k} \right) - 3(N + 1)$$

Where

R_1 = sum of ranks of sample 1

n_1 = size of sample 1

R_2 = sum of ranks of sample 2

n_2 = size of sample 2

R_k = sum of ranks of sample k

n_k = size of sample k

$N = n_1 + n_2 + \dots + n_k$

k = number of samples

MGNREGA: Key indicators - At a Glance from 2006-07 to 2012-13

The MGNREGA has been implemented in phases, commencing from February 2006, and at present it covers all districts of the country with the exception of those that have a 100% urban population. The Act provides a list of works that could be undertaken to generate employment

related to water conservation, drought proofing, land development, and flood control and protection works.

Table 3 MGNREGA: Key indicators - At a Glance from 2006-07 to 2012-13

Year	Number of households provided employment (In crore)	AGR	Average number of person days of work per household	AGR	Total Expenditure (Rs. in lakh)	AGR
2006-07	2.10	-	43	-	8823.35	-
2007-08	3.39	61.43	42	-2.33	15856.88	79.71
2008-09	4.51	33.04	48	14.29	27250.10	71.85
2009-10	5.25	16.41	54	12.50	37905.23	39.10
2010-11	5.49	4.57	47	-12.96	39377.27	3.88
2011-12	4.99	-9.11	43	-8.51	38034.69	-3.41
2012-13	4.25	-14.83	36	-16.28	28073.51	-26.19
CAGR	0.11		-0.03		0.18	

Source: <http://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/?p=3013>

Table 3 shows the annual growth rate (AGR) and compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of number of households provided employment, average number of person days of work per household and total expenditure, under MGNREGA from 2006-07 to 2012-2013. It shows that the AGR for number of households provided employment in the year 2007-08 was 61.43%; gradually it was decreasing over the years and recorded negatively in the year 2012-13 i.e. to the extent of -14.83%. However, the CAGR over the years for number of households provided employment is positive (0.11%), indicating that the number of households provided employment goes on increasing at a normal rate.

The AGR for average number of person days per household in the year 2007-08 was -2.33% and has been triggering over the years and turns negatively for the last three years, finally in the year 2012-13 it was -16.28%, recording a negative growth, the CAGR is negative (-0.03%) over the period of the study. However, the CAGR is positive (0.18%) for total expenditure incurred over the study period. The total expenditure incurred per household during the year 2007-2008 was Rs. 8823.35 lakh, it has been increasing over the years and has been decreased, recording Rs. -3.41% and Rs. -26.19% respectively for the years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Figure 2 – Year – wise Number of households provided employment (in crore) and Average number of person days per household from 2006–07 to 2012-13



Source: <http://www.prsindia.org/theprsblog/?p=3013>

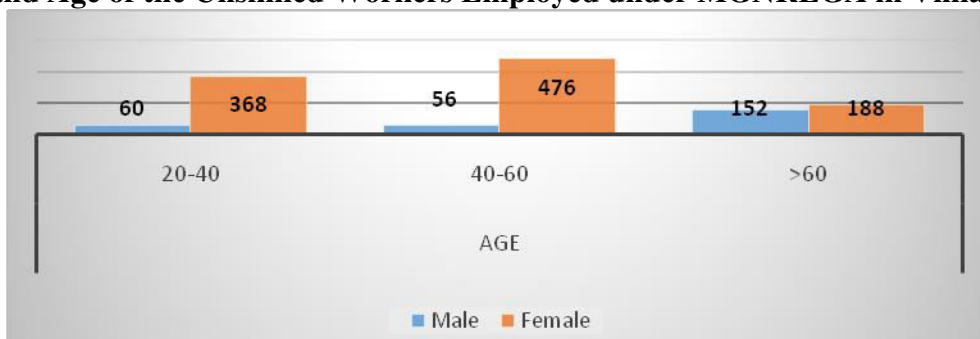
Figure 2 shows the number of households who are provided employment, average number of person days of work per household and expenditure incurred under MGNREGA from 2006-07 to 2012-2013. It shows that number of households provided employment was 2.10 crore in the year 2006-2007; gradually increased to 4.25 crore in the year 2012-2013.

Analysis and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Unskilled Workers

Figure – 3

Gender and Age of the Unskilled Workers Employed under MGNREGA in Villianur Block



Source: Compiled data collected from primary source

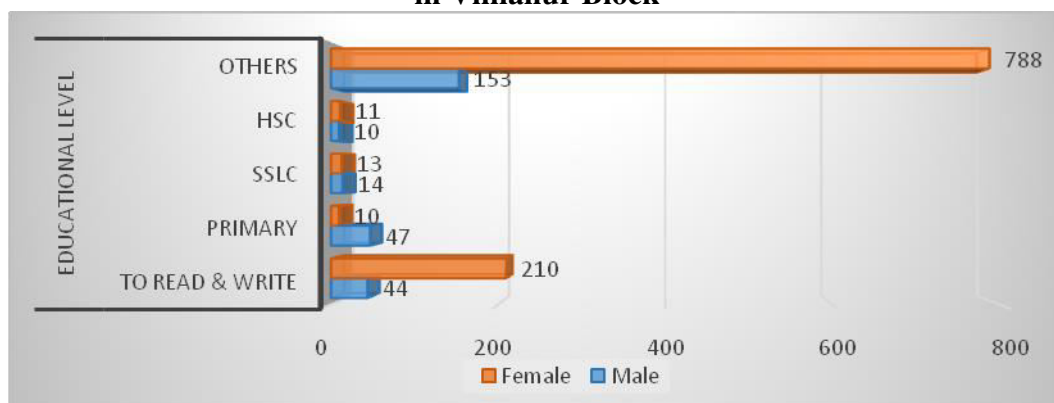
Figure – 3 shows the demographic profile of the respondents viz., gender and age. Out of 1300 unskilled workers, 268 (20.62%) are male and 1032 (79.38%) are female. Out of 268 male respondents, 60 (22.38%) fall under the age group of ‘up to 40 years’, 56 (20.90%) fall in the age category of ‘40-60 years’ and 152 (56.72%) fall in the age category of ‘>60 years’. Out of 1032 female respondents, 368 (35.66%) fall under the age group of ‘up to 40 years’, 476 (46.12%) of

them fall under age category of ‘40-60 years’ and 188 (18.22%) of them fall in ‘>60 years’ age category.

Figure - 4 shows the demographic profile of the unskilled workers viz., gender and educational status. Out of 1300 respondents, 44 (17.32%) male and 210 (82.68%) female unskilled workers know to read and write, 47 (82.46%) male and 10 (17.54%) female unskilled workers have education up to primary level, 14 (51.85%) male and 13 (48.15%) female unskilled workers have education up to SSLC, 10 (47.62%) male and 11 (52.38%) female unskilled workers have education up to HSC respectively.

Figure –4

Gender and Educational level of the unskilled workers Employed under MGNREGA in Villianur Block



Source: Compiled data collected from primary source

Table 4

Ranks for Gender and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Family Size	Male	268	296.16	79370.50
	Female	1032	742.52	766279.50
Wait Days	Male	268	298.09	79888.00
	Female	1032	742.02	765762.00
Mon Exp	Male	268	204.91	54916.00
	Female	1032	766.22	790734.00
Distance	Male	268	650.50	174334.00
	Female	1032	650.50	671316.00
Other Exp	Male	268	385.25	103246.00
	Female	1032	719.38	742404.00
Land	Male	268	385.22	103238.00

	Female	1032	719.39	742412.00
Mobile Phone	Male	268	546.50	146462.00
	Female	1032	677.51	699188.00

Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Table 4 shows the mean rank for the gender. The gender with the highest mean rank is considered as having higher participation in MGNREGS. In this case, the female has the highest mean rank in socio-economic determinants viz., owning of land and mobile phone. It shows that female unskilled workers have higher participation in MGNREGS than the male unskilled workers.

Table 5 provides test statistic, *U* statistic, as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed). It shows that the gender towards socio-economic determinants viz., family size (*U* = 43324.50, *P* = .000), wait days (*U* = 43842, *P* = .000), monthly expenditure (*U* = 18870, *P* = .000) other expenditure (*U* = 67200, *P* = .000), land (*U* = 67192, *P* = .000) and mobile phone (*U* = 110416, *P* = .000) of the female respondents. Hence, H_0^1 “there is no significant difference between gender categories in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA” is rejected.

Table 5

Results of Mann Whitney U- Test for Gender and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Family Size	Wait Days	Monthly Expenses	Distance	Other Expenses	Land	Mobile Phone
Mann-Whitney U	43324.50	43842.00	18870.00	138288.00	67200.00	67192.00	110416.00
Wilcoxon W	79370.50	79888.00	54916.00	671316.00	103246.00	103238.00	146462.00
Z	-18.359	-18.248	-23.083	.000	-16.965	-15.151	-8.016
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Table 6 indicates the age group-wise participation of unskilled workers in MGNREGS. It shows that the age group between 40-60 years has the highest mean rank in socio-economic determinants viz., family size, monthly expenditure, other expenditure, owning of land and mobile phone. It

shows that the unskilled workers belong to age group of ‘40-60 years’ have higher participation in MGNREGS than the unskilled workers in the other categories of age.

Table 6. Ranks for Age and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Age	N	Mean Rank
Family Size	20-40	428	440.34
	40-60	532	808.43
	>60	340	667.94
Monthly Expenses	20-40	428	454.45
	40-60	532	774.07
	>60	340	703.94
Wait Days	20-40	428	444.07
	40-60	532	810.95
	>60	340	659.31
Distance	20-40	428	650.50
	40-60	532	650.50
	>60	340	650.50
Other Exp	20-40	428	584.50
	40-60	532	825.55
	>60	340	459.68
Land	20-40	428	424.29
	40-60	532	786.77
	>60	340	722.03
Mobile Phone	20-40	428	546.50
	40-60	532	905.94
	>60	340	341.91

Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Table 7 provides the results of χ^2 for Kruskal Wallis test. It shows that age towards socio-economic determinants viz., family size ($\chi^2 = 256.63$, $P = .000$), monthly expenditure ($\chi^2 = 203.04$, $P = .000$), wait days ($\chi^2 = 253.82$, $P = .000$), other expenditure ($\chi^2 = 370.13$, $P = .000$), owning of land ($\chi^2 = 323.86$, $P = .000$) and owning of mobile phone ($\chi^2 = 531.02$, $P = .000$) significantly vary. Hence, H_0^2 “there is no significant difference between age groups in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA” is rejected.

Table 7
Results of Kruskal Wallis Test for Age and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Family size	Mon Exp	Wait Days	Distance	Other Exp	Land	Mobile Phone
Chi-Square	256.63	203.04	253.82	.000	370.12	323.86	531.02
df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Table 8 indicates that the respondents who have high education have highest mean rank, hence it is considered as having high participation in MGNREGS. Therefore, the unskilled workers belong to educational category ‘others’ have higher participation in MGNREGS than the respondents who belong to the other categories of education.

Table 8
Ranks for Educational level and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Educational level	N	Mean Rank
Family Size	To read & write	256	290.34
	Primary	52	369.58
	SSLC	24	169.54
	HSC	24	345.75
	Others	944	783.62
Monthly Expenses	To read & write	256	331.92
	Primary	52	278.00
	SSLC	24	160.00
	HSC	24	323.33
	Others	944	778.20
Wait Days	To read & write	256	292.00
	Primary	52	373.12
	SSLC	24	172.08
	HSC	24	349.67
	Others	944	782.81

Distance	To read & write	256	650.50
	Primary	52	650.50
	SSLC	24	650.50
	HSC	24	650.50
	Others	944	650.50
Other Expenses	To read & write	256	517.97
	Primary	52	584.50
	SSLC	24	317.50
	HSC	24	317.50
	Others	944	707.01
Owning Land	To read & write	256	410.53
	Primary	52	278.50
	SSLC	24	603.50
	HSC	24	603.50
	Others	944	738.46
Owning Mobile Phone	To read & write	256	566.81
	Primary	52	546.50

	SSLC	24	546.50
	HSC	24	546.50

	Others	944	684.21
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Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Table 9 shows the results of χ^2 for Kruskal Wallis test which reveals that socio-economic determinants viz., family size ($\chi^2 = 491.54$, $P = .000$), monthly expenditure ($\chi^2 = 452.56$, $P = .000$), wait days ($\chi^2 = 485.21$, $P = .000$), other expenditure ($\chi^2 = 158.24$, $P = .000$), owning of land ($\chi^2 = 283.55$, $P = .000$) and owning of mobile phone ($\chi^2 = 69.46$, $P = .000$) differ significantly in the educational level. Hence, H_0^3 “there is no significant difference between educational categories in respect of the socio-economic determinants of participants in MGNREGA” is rejected.

Table 9 Results of Kruskal Wallis Test for Age and Socio-Economic Determinants of Participants in MGNREGS

Variables	Family size	Monthly Expenses	Wait Days	Distance	Other Expenses	Land	Mobile
Chi-Square	491.54	452.56	485.21	.000	158.24	283.55	69.46
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	1.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Computed data collected from primary source.

Concluding Remarks and Policy Prescription

The MGNREGS is the most significant Scheme to uplift the overall quality of life of rural households from the extreme poverty. The study found that the CAGR over the years for number of households provided employment is positive indicating that the number of households provided employment and total expenditure incurred goes on increasing at a normal rate. The female unskilled workers have the highest mean rank in socio-economic determinants viz., family size, waiting days, monthly expenditure, distance, other expenditure, owning of land and owning of mobile phone. Among the beneficiaries, unskilled workers belong to age group of ‘40-60 years’ have higher participation in MGNREGS than those who belong to the other age categories; and the unskilled workers who fall under educational level ‘others’ have higher participation in MGNREGS than those who fall under other categories of educational levels.

Lack of awareness of the Scheme and information about MGNREGS regarding the works should be widespread for better participation. Lack of 100 days of employment to the unskilled workers especially in some small areas like Puducherry is a major task of the Scheme. Therefore, by exploring more and more allied works, the Scheme may be implemented at least for a period of 100 days in the areas like Puducherry.

Suggestions for improvement in effective Implementation of MGNREGA

➤ **Strengthening Active Citizenship**

Women's participation in Gram Sab has is to be ensured as they become more aware of their citizenship rights and duties.

➤ **Social Audit Programmes**

Delay in conducting periodic social audit programmes to judge the workings of the beneficiaries and to monitor the functioning of the Scheme is also a pitfall of the Scheme. Hence, it is suggested that the Scheme should ensure periodic social audit to assess the performance of the machineries involved in making the Scheme a vibrant and effective one.

➤ **Broadening the Understanding of Poverty to include needs of Women**

The Scheme could have a greater impact on poverty reduction and on development if there were broader understanding of the nature of poverty, especially the constraints faced by women.

Scope for Further Studies

Further studies could be undertaken in the following aspects:

- ❖ To study the impact of socio-economic determinants viz., family size, wait days, monthly expenditure, distance, other expenditure, owning land and other properties by the beneficiaries of MGNREGS on the social status.
- ❖ To assess the implementation of NREGA, its functioning and to suggest suitable policy measures to further strengthen the Scheme.
- ❖ To compare wage differentials between NREGA activities and other employment activities viz., agriculture, etc.

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