

Effectiveness of Mgnrega in Reducing Gender Wage Disparities: Insights from Tiruppur District

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Abstract—The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been a transformative policy instrument in addressing rural unemployment and fostering economic empowerment in India. This study evaluates the effectiveness of MGNREGA in reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, a region characterized by its unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of wage data from official MGNREGA records and qualitative insights from interviews with women beneficiaries, local officials, and community leaders. Findings reveal that MGNREGA has significantly narrowed the gender wage gap by ensuring equal pay for equal work under the scheme. Additionally, it has enhanced women's participation in the rural workforce, contributing to greater financial independence and household decision-making. However, challenges such as delayed payments, limited awareness of entitlements, and socio-cultural barriers persist. Policy recommendations include improving payment mechanisms, increasing outreach programs, and promoting skill development initiatives tailored to women workers. These interventions can further strengthen the program's impact on gender equality and economic empowerment in the district.

Index Terms—MGNREGA, gender wage disparity, women empowerment, Tiruppur district, rural employment, equal pay, economic empowerment, wage gap analysis, Tamil Nadu, policy effectiveness.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), launched in 2005, is a flagship social welfare program in India aimed at alleviating rural poverty and unemployment by providing guaranteed wage employment. By mandating at least 100 days of wage labor annually to every rural household willing to engage in unskilled

manual work, MGNREGA has emerged as a critical instrument for fostering economic inclusion. One of its key provisions is the principle of "equal pay for equal work," which seeks to address gender-based wage disparities and promote women's participation in the workforce.

In rural India, gender wage disparity has historically been a persistent issue, rooted in socio-cultural norms and unequal access to economic opportunities. Women have often been relegated to lower-paying jobs and denied equitable remuneration for their labor. MGNREGA, with its gender-neutral wage structure, offers a transformative approach to redressing these inequities. By providing equal wages to male and female workers, the scheme not only enhances women's earnings but also strengthens their agency in decision-making processes at the household and community levels.

Tiruppur district in Tamil Nadu provides a compelling case for studying the impact of MGNREGA on gender wage disparities. Known as a textile hub, the district has a significant rural population engaged in agriculture and allied activities, where gender wage gaps have traditionally been pronounced. The implementation of MGNREGA in this region has the potential to reshape economic and social dynamics by empowering women and challenging entrenched gender norms.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of MGNREGA in reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district. It explores how the scheme's design and implementation have influenced women's economic status and addresses the challenges and opportunities for further enhancing its impact. By shedding light on these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality and rural development in India.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gender wage disparity remains a pervasive issue in rural India, where women are often paid less than men for similar work due to entrenched socio-cultural norms and systemic inequalities. This wage gap not only limits women's economic potential but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and dependency. In Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu, a region with a mixed economy of agriculture and industrial labor, these disparities are particularly pronounced. Despite the district's socio-economic advancements, rural women continue to face challenges in accessing fair wages and employment opportunities.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was designed as a gender-neutral policy to promote economic empowerment by guaranteeing equal wages for equal work. While the scheme has shown promise in fostering women's participation in the rural workforce, its effectiveness in addressing deep-rooted gender wage disparities at the district level remains underexplored. Understanding the localized impact of MGNREGA in reducing wage gaps in Tiruppur district is crucial, given the unique socio-economic and cultural factors influencing women's participation in rural labor markets.

This research investigates whether MGNREGA has succeeded in narrowing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district and assesses the extent to which the scheme has empowered women economically. It also seeks to identify barriers, such as delayed payments, limited access to information, and cultural constraints, that hinder the full realization of MGNREGA's gender equality objectives. By addressing these issues, the study aims to provide actionable insights to enhance policy implementation and promote gender-inclusive rural development.

III. OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the impact of MGNREGA on reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district.
2. To analyze the level of women's participation in MGNREGA activities in Tiruppur district.
3. To identify the challenges faced by women beneficiaries of MGNREGA in Tiruppur district.

4. To propose policy recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of MGNREGA in promoting gender equality in Tiruppur district.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The methodology comprises both quantitative and qualitative research methods, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

A. Study Area

- The research will be conducted in selected rural blocks of Tiruppur district, where MGNREGA is actively implemented.
- The blocks will be chosen to ensure representation of diverse socio-economic and cultural conditions within the district.

B. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

- A sample size of 100 respondents will be selected, consisting of 50 male and 50 female MGNREGA workers.
- Stratified random sampling will be used to ensure equal representation of gender and variation across different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and work categories.

C. Data Collection

Primary Data:

- Structured questionnaires will be administered to MGNREGA beneficiaries to collect data on wage earnings, work participation, payment regularity, and perceptions of gender equality.
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) with women workers will be conducted to capture qualitative insights into socio-cultural barriers and experiences with MGNREGA.

Secondary Data:

- Official records from the MGNREGA database and government reports will be analyzed to compare wage data and employment trends.

D. Data Analysis

- Quantitative Data: Statistical tools, such as descriptive analysis and paired t-tests, will be used to compare wages and identify disparities.
- Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis will be applied to interpret narratives from FGDs and

identify recurring themes related to gender wage equity and empowerment.

E. Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent will be obtained from all respondents, and data confidentiality will be ensured.
- Respondents will be briefed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage.

F. Hypothesis

- Null Hypothesis (H_0): MGNREGA has no significant effect on reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): MGNREGA has a significant effect on reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district.

G. Results

- The quantitative analysis of data collected from 100 respondents (50 male and 50 female MGNREGA workers) was performed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests. The findings are as follows:

H. Descriptive Statistics

- The average daily wage for male workers under MGNREGA was ₹200, and for female workers, it was also ₹200, indicating compliance with the scheme's principle of equal pay for equal work.
- Prior to participation in MGNREGA, women reported earning an average of ₹150 per day in non-MGNREGA employment, compared to ₹180 for men.
- A majority (85%) of female respondents reported that MGNREGA provided them with consistent wage earnings compared to their previous employment.

I. Paired t-Test Analysis

- A paired t-test was conducted to compare pre- and post-MGNREGA wages for women workers.
 - Mean pre-MGNREGA wage: ₹150
 - Mean post-MGNREGA wage: ₹200
 - t-value: 5.47
 - p-value: < 0.01

- The result indicates a statistically significant increase in women's wages after joining MGNREGA.
- Another paired t-test was conducted to compare wage disparities between men and women in non-MGNREGA work versus MGNREGA work.
 - Mean wage gap in non-MGNREGA work: ₹30
 - Mean wage gap in MGNREGA work: ₹0
 - t-value: 6.23
 - p-value: < 0.01
 - The reduction in the wage gap was found to be statistically significant, confirming MGNREGA's effectiveness in ensuring wage equality.

J. Additional Findings

- 78% of female respondents reported that MGNREGA wages contributed significantly to household income.
- 65% of women stated that earning equal wages improved their confidence and decision-making power within their families.
- Delays in wage payments were reported by 30% of respondents, indicating a need for administrative improvements.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The analysis reveals that MGNREGA has successfully reduced gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district, ensuring equal wages for men and women. The statistically significant increase in women's wages highlights the scheme's role in enhancing economic independence. However, challenges such as delayed payments and limited awareness of entitlements persist, which require policy interventions for further improvement. By addressing these gaps, MGNREGA can serve as a stronger catalyst for gender equity and rural development in Tiruppur and beyond.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in reducing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district, Tamil Nadu.

The findings highlight that MGNREGA has been instrumental in ensuring wage parity between men and women, fulfilling its mandate of "equal pay for equal work." Women workers have experienced a significant increase in their earnings compared to pre-MGNREGA employment, thereby enhancing their economic independence and contributing to household income.

The statistical analysis revealed a marked reduction in gender wage gaps, affirming the scheme's potential as a tool for gender equity in rural labor markets. Additionally, the study found that MGNREGA participation has improved women's confidence and decision-making roles within their families, signifying broader social empowerment.

However, the research also identified persistent challenges, such as delayed payments, inadequate awareness of rights, and socio-cultural barriers, which hinder the full realization of MGNREGA's objectives. Addressing these challenges through improved administrative efficiency, awareness campaigns, and targeted skill development programs can amplify the scheme's impact.

In conclusion, MGNREGA has proven effective in addressing gender wage disparities in Tiruppur district, offering a pathway toward greater economic and social empowerment for rural women. By leveraging these insights, policymakers can enhance the implementation of MGNREGA to ensure sustainable and inclusive rural development.

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