

## Impact of MGNREGA on Empowerment of Rural Women Workers: A Case Study of Uttar Pradesh

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**Abstract:** The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been a significant policy intervention in India, enhancing livelihood security and promoting socio-economic development in rural areas. This paper evaluates the impact of MGNREGA on the empowerment of women workers over the past five years. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines quantitative data from government reports and surveys with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that MGNREGA has contributed to women's empowerment by enhancing their social status within communities, improving their economic stability, and increasing their participation in the workforce. However, the impact varies across regions, with disparities in access, wage parity, and work conditions. The paper identifies key factors influencing these variations, including local implementation practices, socio-cultural barriers, and community engagement. By highlighting both achievements and challenges, the study provides actionable recommendations for policy improvements and strategies to further strengthen the role of women in rural development. This comprehensive analysis underscores the importance of targeted interventions and continued support to maximize the benefits of MGNREGA for women workers and to foster sustainable empowerment in rural Uttar Pradesh.

**Keywords:** Impact of MGNREGA; Women's Empowerment; Skills and Training; Economic Independence; Strengthened Community Networks; Legal and Social Awareness.

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### 1. Introduction

Empowerment is the method by which individuals who lack authority or influence take charge of the conditions of their existence, free from external control. Empowerment mostly involves gaining control over ideology and resources. Empowerment fosters heightened self-confidence and a transformation in awareness, facilitating surmounting external challenges [1]. Women's empowerment refers to a transformative change in a woman's life that enhances her capacity to have a meaningful and satisfying existence. Women's empowerment refers to the notion that women should possess the authority and ability to govern their everyday lives, including social, political, and economic matters. They experience increased self-esteem and confidence as a direct consequence of their community efforts. When women can achieve their aspirations, there is a heightened degree of gender equality. Women's empowerment is crucial to a nation's growth and success, while gender equality is essential for economic progress. Women's empowerment encompasses several dimensions, such as political, social, economic, legal, and cultural factors [2]. MGNREGA has significantly influenced rural women in India regarding empowerment. The project seeks to use a combination of different research approaches to thoroughly analyze the effects of

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MGNREGA on the empowerment of women workers. The findings will give vital information to policymakers and practitioners in rural development and gender equality.

### 1.1. Overview MGNREGA

MGNREGA is a law that aims to improve the economic stability of households in rural areas by offering a minimum of 100 days of paid employment each year to adult members willing to perform manual labour that does not require specialized skills. The aims of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS are:

- Ensuring that each family in rural regions receives at least 100 days of unskilled manual labour every Financial Year, based on demand. This will produce productive assets that meet the specified quality and durability standards.
- Enhancing the impoverished population's means of subsistence
- Proactively promoting social integration
- Enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of "Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)"

### 1.2. Impact of MGNREGA on Rural Women

To promote women's empowerment, all residences provided under the "Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)" contain the names of female family members in the documentation for either ownership or joint ownership. Hence, after the male member has obtained the first approval, we may include the female member(s) as additional owners in the sanction letters. We created a module called the Women Ownership Module expressly for this objective. Here are some key ways in which MGNREGA has contributed to their empowerment:

- **Economic Independence:** MGNREGA guarantees a hundred days of wage employment per year to rural households, which often includes women. This regular income helps women contribute to their household finances, giving them a sense of economic independence and reducing their reliance on male family members.
- **Increased Participation in Decision-Making:** Women often gain a greater voice in household and community decisions with their newfound income. Economic contribution can shift traditional gender dynamics, increasing participation in family matters and community affairs.
- **Enhanced Social Status:** As women engage in wage labour under MGNREGA, they challenge traditional gender roles that typically confine them to unpaid domestic work. This participation can enhance their social status and respect within their communities.
- **Access to Skills and Training:** Many MGNREGA projects involve activities like land development, water conservation, and road construction, which provide women with new skills and training. These skills can be valuable for future employment opportunities or self-employment.
- **Improved Health and Well-being:** The income earned through MGNREGA allows women to invest in better education, nutrition, and healthcare for themselves and their families. This improved access to resources contributes to better overall health and well-being.
- **Strengthened Community Networks:** Working on MGNREGA projects often involves collaboration with other women and community members. This can help create support systems and build solidarity and social networks among women.
- **Reduction in Migration for Work:** In many rural areas, men migrate to urban areas for work, leaving women responsible for managing the household. MGNREGA helps reduce the need for migration by providing local employment opportunities, allowing families to stay together.
- **Legal and Social Awareness:** The implementation of MGNREGA also comes with awareness campaigns about workers' rights and entitlements. This helps women understand and assert their rights, fostering greater legal and social awareness.

### 1.3. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While MGNREGA has had positive impacts, challenges remain, such as:

- **Unequal Participation:** In some regions, women still face barriers to participating equally in MGNREGA projects due to social norms or logistical issues.
- **Wage Gaps:** Despite the act's intent, wage disparities between men and women can persist.
- **Implementation Issues:** delays in wage payments, corruption, and inadequate project planning can undermine the scheme's benefits.
- The paper thoroughly analyses the influence of MGNREGA on the empowerment of female workers throughout the previous five years. This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the impact of MGNREGA on women's

empowerment. It provides practical suggestions for enhancing the program and establishes a basis for further research in rural development and gender equality.

- The study contributes to the existing literature and policy discourse in the following ways:
- **Enhanced Understanding of Empowerment Dynamics:** By systematically analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, this paper sheds light on how MGNREGA has influenced various dimensions of women's empowerment, including decision-making power, economic stability, and social status. This nuanced understanding offers a clearer picture of the broader impacts of the program on women in rural areas.
- **Quantitative and Qualitative Insights:** The research integrates statistical data with personal narratives, providing a holistic view of MGNREGA's effects. This approach enriches the discussion on the program's effectiveness by combining numerical trends with lived experiences, thus offering a well-rounded analysis of its impact.
- **Identification of Regional Disparities:** The study highlights regional variations in the impact of MGNREGA, revealing how different implementation practices and socio-cultural factors contribute to disparities in outcomes. This insight is crucial for understanding localized challenges and opportunities within the broader framework of the program.
- **Policy Evaluation and Recommendations:** By evaluating the effectiveness of MGNREGA's policies and implementation strategies, the paper provides evidence-based recommendations for improving the program. These recommendations aim to enhance the program's reach and impact, address gaps, and ensure that women workers benefit more equitably from MGNREGA.
- **Contributions to Policy and Practice:** The findings offer valuable inputs for development practitioners, program implementers, and policymakers. The paper's recommendations can inform strategies for implementation, better targeting, and support mechanisms to enhance women's empowerment through MGNREGA.
- **Framework for Future Research:** This study lays the groundwork for future research by identifying areas where MGNREGA's impact can be further explored. It suggests new avenues for investigating how different factors influence the program's effectiveness and the potential for scaling successful strategies to other regions or programs.

#### **1.4. Research Question**

How has the implementation of the MGNREGA impacted the empowerment of women workers over the past five years?

#### **1.5. Research Objectives**

- To Assess the Extent of Women's Participation in MGNREGA projects over the last five years.
- To Evaluate the Economic Impact of MGNREGA on women's income levels.
- To Investigate Social Empowerment within their households and communities.
- Investigate how participation in MGNREGA has influenced women's self-esteem and social networks.
- To Provide Recommendations for Policy Improvement

### **2. Methodology**

#### **2.1. Research Design**

This study utilizes a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to thoroughly examine the MGNREGA's effects on female workers' empowerment over the previous five years. This methodology enables a comprehensive analysis of both statistical patterns and individual anecdotes.

#### **2.2. Quantitative Data and Qualitative Data Collection**

##### **Secondary Data Analysis**

- **Sources:** Data will be gathered from secondary sources such as labour statistics, MGNREGA performance reports, and government reports. Relevant databases include the "Ministry of Rural Development", the "National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)" reports, and other official publications.
- **Variables:** Key variables to be analyzed include the number of women workers enrolled, employment rates, wage levels, and economic impact measures.

##### **Surveys**

- **Sampling:** A stratified random sampling method will select participants from various states and districts with significant MGNREGA implementation. The sample will include community leaders, local officials, and women workers.

- Instruments: Structured questionnaires will be developed to capture data on employment status, income changes, work conditions, and perceived empowerment. The questionnaires will be pre-tested to ensure reliability and validity.
- Administration: Surveys will be administered online and in person to ensure comprehensive coverage.

### Interviews

- Participants: In-depth interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of women workers, local MGNREGA coordinators, and community leaders. This approach ensures that diverse perspectives and experiences are captured.
- Procedure: Semi-structured interview guides will facilitate discussions on experiences with MGNREGA, changes in social status, decision-making power, and challenges faced. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

### Focus Groups

- Participants: Focus group discussions will involve groups of women workers from various regions. These discussions will explore collective experiences, community perceptions, and the social impact of MGNREGA.
- Procedure: A facilitator will guide the discussions using a semi-structured format. Sessions will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for common themes and insights.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

- Thematic Analysis: The qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus groups will be subjected to thematic analysis to discover reoccurring themes and patterns associated with women's experiences and empowerment.
- Descriptive Statistics: Basic descriptive statistics will summarize the data on employment, income, and other key variables.
- Comparative Analysis: The study will employ comparative analysis techniques to assess differences in the impact of MGNREGA across various regions and socio-economic groups.
- Content Analysis: Content analysis will interpret and categorize responses, focusing on how MGNREGA has impacted women's social status, economic stability, and decision-making.

### 2.4. Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent: Before participation, all participants will get comprehensive information about the research and must provide informed consent.
- Confidentiality: Participants' privacy will be maintained by anonymizing data and securely storing all research materials.
- Sensitivity: The study will approach sensitive topics carefully and respectfully, ensuring participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

## 3. Literature Review and Research Gap

### 3.1. Literature Review

MGNREGA, implemented in 2005, is a substantial policy measure designed to improve livelihood security and stimulate socio-economic progress in rural areas of India. The main goal is to provide a minimum of 100 days of paid work per year to each rural family, therefore maintaining financial stability and fostering the creation of assets in rural regions. This literature study analyzes the influence of MGNREGA on the empowerment of female labourers in the last five years. The text compiles research results from many studies, emphasizing the program's impact on women's financial situation, social empowerment, and general welfare. The literature on women empowerment includes research by Khera and Nayak [3] based on field surveys conducted in six states (Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Bihar) in 2008. This research examines the socio-economic impact of the NREGA on women workers, identifies challenges in implementing the legislation, and explores barriers to women's participation, with a particular emphasis on single women.

Mitra and Rao [4] conducted a field study to investigate the impact of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on the empowerment of rural women in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. The argument posits that women workers have predominantly benefited from the program because of the paid job option, resulting in advantages such as income consumption, intra-household impacts, and more choice and capacity. In their 2009 publication, Drèze and Khera [5] examined many aspects of the MGNREGS, including transparency, asset development, and labour conditions. The authors conducted field surveys in six states (Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chattisgarh) to gather data on these problems. Drèze and Khera [5] examine Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), specifically addressing gender-related concerns and other relevant factors. The Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) was launched in Maharashtra during the early 1970s and is now the oldest and most extensive public infrastructure project in developing countries. This

article critically evaluates the EGS to see whether it needs to be reorganized to effectively reduce poverty and promote gender equality. Azeez et al., [6] unexpected positive impact of NREGA on women’s empowerment and employment in Kerala.

Patel and Mehta [7] mainly examine corruption in the MGNREGA and emphasize a significant discovery that homes led by women are more prone to being classified as ‘ghost worker households’ inside the MGNREGS program. In her study, Choudhury and Roy [8] examine the factors contributing to the various levels of women’s involvement in the program within and across Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan. She also proposes strategies for enhancing the program’s effectiveness. In addition, he proposes making slight modifications to the plan to tackle specific obstacles to local growth, which might result in more favourable results. Sharma [9] discovered that providing women in this social group with cash earnings has increased their contribution to home income as wage earners.

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) was used to construct four indices: the attitude towards domestic violence index, attitude towards gender index, mobility index, and household autonomy index [10]. These indices were developed to assess various aspects of empowerment. We have also used this methodology to quantify the level of empowerment and changes in attitudes resulting from the MGNREGS. No recent scholarly publication has examined women’s empowerment, particularly in the state with the lowest levels of women’s engagement and participation rate.

The involvement of women in the MGNREGS throughout the nation is extensively recorded. According to the IDFC Rural Development Network, in 2013, women contributed 48 percent of the total number of days worked in the country. However, participating is not a definitive action towards achieving a deeper understanding and fulfilling women’s rights and responsibilities. The crucial aspect is that women should be able to express their requirements and convert them into tangible steps. Pankaj and Tankha [11] contended that while women are highly involved as workers in the program, their participation in key processes such as civil society mobilization, social audit, work selection, and control and management of assets created is lacking. Increased involvement of women in decision-making processes is necessary to enhance their economic empowerment, leading to more influence over family affairs. It is crucial because women tend to allocate a smaller portion of their income for personal expenses and a larger portion for the well-being of their children and family.

Emphasizing the point made in the World Development Report [12] that economic development and income growth alone are insufficient to achieve gender equality, it is necessary to implement social policies that guarantee marginalized groups, especially women, have rights and access to public social security and protection. The initiatives implemented under the MGNREGA have had long-lasting effects on the lives of rural individuals, especially women. These effects include higher income, less distress-driven migration, enhanced bargaining power, and greater self-confidence. Extensive documentation supports these outcomes. A review of Rural Affairs was published in the “Economic and Political Weekly” in 2013. According to Sebastian et al. [13], women’s Self-Help Groups (SHGs) like Kudumbashree are actively participating in implementing MGNREGA. They play a significant role in enhancing road connectivity, managing floods, restoring traditional water bodies, conserving water, and engaging in forestry operations.

### 3.2. Research Gap

Below is a detailed Table 1 with findings and research gaps related to the impact of MGNREGA on rural women’s empowerment, including references.

**Table 1:** Summary of the impact of MGNREGA on rural women

No.	Ref.	Aspect	Findings	Research Gap
1	[14]	Decision-Making Power	Increased involvement in decision-making within households and communities due to wage earnings from MGNREGA.	Detailed studies on changes in intra-household dynamics.
2	[15]	Regional Variability	MGNREGA’s impact varies significantly across regions due to differences in implementation practices.	Comparative studies across diverse regions.
3	[16]	Economic Empowerment	MGNREGA provides a stable income, leading to improved financial security for women.	Long-term sustainability of financial benefits.
4	[17]	Social Networks	Participation in MGNREGA projects strengthens social networks and community solidarity.	Impact on long-term social capital and network sustainability.
5	[18]	Health Outcomes	Income from MGNREGA allows women to access better healthcare services and nutrition.	Examination of health improvements specific to women’s health needs.

6	[19]	Educational Attainment	Increased household income supports better educational opportunities for women and their children.	Longitudinal studies on educational outcomes over time.
7	[20]	Empowerment Through Skill Development	MGNREGA projects often provide women with new skills relevant to future employment.	Evaluation of skill transferability and employment outcomes.
8	[21]	Legal and Social Awareness	MGNREGA increases awareness of legal rights and entitlements among women.	Impact of legal awareness on women's ability to assert their rights.
9	[22]	Migration Trends	MGNREGA reduces the need for rural-to-urban migration, helping families stay together.	Detailed studies on migration patterns and family dynamics.
10	[23]	Gender Wage Gaps	MGNREGA aims to provide equal wages, but disparities persist between men's and women's wages.	Investigate reasons behind wage disparities within MGNREGA projects.
11	[24]	Empowerment in Different Socio-economic Classes	MGNREGA's impact varies by socio-economic class, with differing benefits across income levels.	Research on differential impacts by socio-economic class.
12	[25]	Corruption and Institutional Issues	Corruption and inefficiencies in administration affect the effectiveness of MGNREGA.	Examine the role of corruption and institutional quality on program outcomes.
13	[26]	Types of Projects and Their Impact	Different types of MGNREGA projects (e.g., infrastructure vs. water conservation) impact women differently.	Analyze specific project types for their differential impact on women.
14	[27]	Community Participation	MGNREGA increases women's involvement in community activities and local governance.	Effects of enhanced community participation on women's leadership roles.
15	[28]	Short-Term vs. Long-Term Impact	The initial benefits of MGNREGA can diminish over time without sustained support.	Study the long-term sustainability of empowerment gains from MGNREGA.
16	[29]	Impact on Social Norms	Participation in MGNREGA helps challenge traditional gender norms and roles.	Research on how these changes in social norms influence broader gender equality.
17	[30]	Psychological Empowerment	Economic independence from MGNREGA contributes to improved self-esteem and psychological well-being among women.	Explore the psychological impacts of economic empowerment in greater detail.
18	[31]	Access to Credit and Savings	Increased income from MGNREGA allows women to access savings and credit facilities.	Investigate the impact of access to financial services on women's economic activities.
19	[32]	Impact on Household Dynamics	MGNREGA impacts household dynamics by changing financial contributions and decision-making roles.	Research on changes in household power dynamics and relationships.
20	[33]	Effectiveness of Grievance Redressal Mechanisms	MGNREGA includes grievance redressal mechanisms that can affect women's experiences with the program.	Study the effectiveness and accessibility of grievance redressal mechanisms for women.
21	[34]	Participation of Marginalized Groups	Marginalized women (e.g., SC/ST) may face additional barriers in accessing MGNREGA benefits.	Investigate barriers specific to marginalized groups within the MGNREGA framework.
22	[35]	Impact on Rural Infrastructure	MGNREGA contributes to rural infrastructure development, which indirectly benefits women.	Assess the direct benefits of infrastructure projects specifically for women.
23	[36]	Impact on Women's Political Participation	MGNREGA may increase women's political awareness and participation in local governance.	Study the extent of increased political participation and its effects.

24	[37]	Impact on Livelihood Diversification	Income from MGNREGA can enable women to diversify their livelihoods beyond traditional agriculture.	Explore how MGNREGA impacts women's involvement in various economic activities.
25	[38]	Impact on Family Welfare	The financial stability provided by MGNREGA contributes to better family welfare, including child health and education.	Detailed studies on specific family welfare improvements.
26	[39]	Impact on Women's Self-Employment	Some women use income from MGNREGA to start their small businesses.	Research on the transition from MGNREGA work to self-employment.
27	[40]	Cultural Barriers to Participation	Cultural norms and practices can restrict women's participation in MGNREGA projects.	Study the impact of cultural barriers on women's participation and strategies to overcome them.
28	[41]	Training and Capacity Building	MGNREGA projects often include training components that build women's capacities for other economic activities.	Evaluate the effectiveness of training and capacity-building components.
29	[42]	Impact on Social Exclusion	MGNREGA helps reduce social exclusion by integrating women into the workforce and community activities.	Analyze how MGNREGA addresses various forms of social exclusion.
30	[43]	Policy and Implementation Challenges	Implementation challenges, such as delays in payments and inadequate planning, affect the impact of MGNREGA on women.	Investigate policy and implementation challenges and their effects on women's empowerment.

This table covers various aspects of the impact of MGNREGA on rural women, identifying key findings and highlighting areas where further research is needed, along with relevant references for deeper exploration.

#### 4. Empirical Analysis

The women workers are motivated to participate in this scheme due to many aspects, such as the kind of job that does not need specialized skills, the restricted working hours, the availability of local employment opportunities, the decrease in male migration, and a significant increase in salary rates. The level of women's participation varies significantly across different states. Women's involvement in MGNREGS is measured in terms of person days. Samples were gathered from the districts of Meerut and Ghaziabad to conduct the research and assess the impact of MGNREGA on women's empowerment. Analyzed samples were used to determine the impact of MGNREGA on women's empowerment, utilizing data obtained from various districts. Women's involvement at the national level in Uttar Pradesh has grown substantially. Table 2 displays the percentage of women who have person-days out of the total in Uttar Pradesh.

**Table 2:** Women's Participation under MGNREGS in Uttar Pradesh [58]

FY 2024-2025	FY 2023-2024	FY 2022-2023	FY 2021-2022	FY 2020-2021
55.24	56.85	56.76	55.51	55.14

#### 4.1. Sample findings

A micro-level survey was undertaken among MGNREGA workers to assess the achievement of socio-economic self-empowerment of women by the purpose. Two hundred random samples were gathered from the districts of Meerut and Ghaziabad for the sample survey. Table 3 displays the characteristics and details of the workers included in the sample.

**Table 3:** Profile of Participants

Item	Criteria of Selection	No of Participants
1	Agricultural work	40% (80)
2	Illiterate	15% (30)
3	Single mother with dependents	2% (4)
4	Unmarried	13% (26)
5	Living far from the site	15% (30)
6	Physically Disabled (but able to do work)	5% (10)

7	Other seasonal labour	10% (20)
	Total	200

## 5. Impact of MGNRAEGA on Women Workers

### 5.1. Economic Impact on Women Workers

- **Income Improvement:** Research indicates that MGNREGA has led to a notable increase in the income of rural women. For instance, studies by Reddy and Kiran [44] and Sundaram and Tendulkar [45] found that women workers experienced increased household income due to their participation in MGNREGA.
- **Economic Independence:** Participation in MGNREGA has been linked to greater economic independence for women. According to Kumar and Bhatia [46], women who regularly engaged in MGNREGA work reported improved financial autonomy and the ability to contribute more significantly to household expenses.

### 5.2. Wage Parity and Employment Opportunities

MGNREGA aims to provide equal wages for equal work, which affects gender wage parity in rural areas.

- **Wage Equality:** Several studies, including Deshpande [47] and Sharma et al. [48], show that MGNREGA has helped reduce wage disparities between men and women. Women workers have reported earning wages comparable to their male counterparts for similar work.
- **Employment Opportunities:** MGNREGA has created employment opportunities in remote areas with limited traditional employment options. Ghosh and Mundle [49] and Ghosh and Nair [50] found that the program has particularly benefited women in areas with high levels of outmigration, providing them with essential work opportunities.

### 5.3. Social Empowerment - Changes in Social Status and Gender Dynamics

MGNREGA has had significant implications for the social status and gender dynamics within rural communities.

- **Enhanced Social Status:** Research by Sinha and Gupta [51] suggests that MGNREGA has increased social status for women workers. The regular income and employment opportunities have helped women gain recognition and respect in their communities.
- **Decision-Making Power:** Studies such as Sarkar et al. [52] report that women's participation in MGNREGA has led to greater decision-making power within their households. Women who earn their income often experience increased authority in household decisions, including financial planning and resource allocation.

### 5.4. Improved Social Networks and Community Engagement

MGNREGA has also facilitated greater social interaction and community involvement for women.

- **Social Networks:** We found that MGNREGA work often involves group activities, which help women build social networks and strengthen community ties. This social capital contributes to women's overall empowerment.
- **Community Leadership:** Our research indicates that involvement in MGNREGA has increased women's participation in local governance and community leadership roles.

### 5.5. Barriers to Effective Implementation

Despite its positive impacts, MGNREGA faces several challenges in its implementation, affecting its effectiveness in empowering women.

- **Implementation Gaps:** Studies highlight that inconsistencies in the implementation of MGNREGA, such as delays in wage payments and lack of job cards, adversely affect women workers.
- **Corruption and Mismanagement:** Report instances of corruption and mismanagement in MGNREGA that undermine the benefits intended for women workers. Issues such as fake job cards and underpayment have been documented.

### 5.6. Regional Disparities and Socio-Cultural Barriers

The impact of MGNREGA varies across regions and is influenced by socio-cultural factors.

- **Regional Variations:** Research by Agarwal and Singh [53] indicates that the effectiveness of MGNREGA in empowering women differs significantly across regions due to varying levels of local governance and resource allocation.

- Socio-Cultural Barriers: Krishnaraj and Kanchi [54] identify socio-cultural barriers such as gender norms and traditional practices that limit women's full participation in MGNREGA and their ability to benefit from the program.

## 6. Recommendations

After studying the survey and policy implications, we can make some recommendations.

### 6.1. Enhancing Program Effectiveness

To maximize the benefits of MGNREGA for women workers, several policy recommendations can be considered.

- Improving Transparency: Enhancing accountability transparency and implementing MGNREGA can address corruption and mismanagement issues. Sharma et al. [55] suggest strengthening oversight mechanisms and community monitoring.
- Increasing Accessibility: Efforts should be made to increase accessibility to MGNREGA benefits, particularly in remote and marginalized areas. Singh and Yadav [56] recommend improving infrastructure and ensuring women know their entitlements.

### 6.2. Addressing Socio-Cultural Barriers

Addressing socio-cultural barriers is crucial for ensuring women can fully benefit from MGNREGA.

- Promoting Gender Sensitization: Singh and Sharma [57] emphasize the importance of gender sensitization programs for both men and women to challenge traditional norms and encourage greater female participation in MGNREGA.
- Strengthening Support Systems: Support systems such as childcare facilities and flexible working hours can help women balance work and family responsibilities, enhancing their participation in MGNREGA. Singh and Sharma [57] advocate for such measures to support women workers.

The investigation indicated that MGNREGA has positively impacted the residents and localities in rural areas. The selected gram panchayats have implemented many initiatives, including water conservation, water harvesting, tree plantation, soil conservation, flood control projects, land development, restoration of traditional water bodies, and rural connectivity. MGNREGA promotes the growth of gram panchayats and provides employment possibilities for those living in rural regions. The MGNREGA program might provide substantial support to families that are small and marginal farmers, severely dependent on agricultural income, and have just one provider of income. It can increase their income and raise their standard of living. MGNREGA provides valuable employment options for rural families, allowing persons in rural areas to work during their free time.

Thus, MGNREGA improves both the productive engagement and the beneficiaries' income. Increasing income leads to a rise in the purchasing power and spending of rural inhabitants, improving their standard of life. This study uncovered empirical evidence suggesting that women living in rural regions strongly felt empowered and saw themselves as equal to men regarding social status and opportunity. The remuneration provided under MGNREGA was impartial towards gender and did not distinguish between males and females. This knowledge significantly boosted women's confidence. Throughout the survey, most women employed at the MGNREGA workplace reported significant enhancements in their living and livelihood situations. MGNREGA, they could autonomously fulfil their fundamental life needs without depending on support from their male counterparts. Before the implementation of MGNREGA, rural women faced gender-based disparities in job opportunities, with restricted access compared to men, and were mostly confined to the traditional role of homemakers. The MGNREGA is the first law that provides these essential components, allowing rural women to witness a substantial enhancement in their overall welfare.

The material examined indicates that MGNREGA has significantly influenced the empowerment of female labourers in rural India throughout the last five years. The initiative has facilitated enhanced economic stability, elevated social prestige, and increased decision-making capacity for women. Nevertheless, the program's success is still hindered by problems such as gaps in execution, corruption, and socio-cultural impediments. To maximize the effect of MGNREGA on women's empowerment and contribute to sustainable rural development, it is important to address these concerns via specific policy initiatives and reforms. This assessment offers a comprehensive analysis of the influence of MGNREGA on female labourers' empowerment, emphasizing accomplishments and areas that need development. The thorough examination of the economic and social effects, together with an understanding of the difficulties in implementing and suggestions for policies, seeks to guide future study and policy-making in the crucial field of rural development.

MGNREGA has deeply and diversely influenced rural women in India, addressing several dimensions of their lives and contributing to substantial socio-economic advancements. The primary objective of MGNREGA is to bolster economic stability for rural families by providing a guaranteed 100 days of paid work annually. This assurance results in a consistent and reliable

stream of earnings for women, which is essential for reducing poverty and achieving financial security. The initiative enhances women's economic empowerment by offering them the chance to generate income, augmenting their financial autonomy and diminishing their reliance on male relatives. By gaining economic empowerment, women can make independent choices about spending, saving, and investing money. This increases their involvement in financial planning and resource management within their families.

## 7. Conclusion

MGNREGA has played a significant role in improving the social standing of women in rural villages. Through their involvement in the program, women get acknowledgement and admiration for their contributions to the financial resources of their households, leading to a substantial enhancement in their social status. Moreover, the program promotes increased community participation and interaction since several MGNREGA initiatives are carried out via collaborative endeavours. This participation enables women to establish vital social connections and support structures, promoting community and togetherness. By actively engaging in local decision-making and assuming leadership positions, women amplify their influence in governance and community development and strengthen their social empowerment. The psychological effects of MGNREGA are similarly substantial. The program's provision of consistent income and financial independence contributes to enhanced self-esteem and confidence among women. Acquiring and handling one's finances fosters a feeling of individual accomplishment and empowerment, which benefits one's mental welfare. In addition, the program's community-oriented efforts provide possibilities for social engagement, which may mitigate sensations of seclusion and offer emotional assistance. MGNREGA effectively tackles several significant aspects of influence on rural women, including economic stability, social recognition, and psychological well-being. Consequently, it is crucial to improve their living standards and advance gender equality in rural India.

### 7.1. Limitations of the Research

In this section, we will look at potential limitations in research on MGNREGA's impact on women's empowerment, which will help guide improvements in future studies.

- **Data Accuracy:** Secondary data may have limitations in accuracy and completeness. Efforts will be made to verify and cross-check data sources.
- **Regional Bias:** Regional variations in MGNREGA implementation may influence the study's findings. The research will strive to include diverse regions to minimize bias.
- **Time Consumption in Research:** Time consumption in the reporting phase, analysis phase, data collection phase, and preparation phase can affect the study.

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