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## Assessment of participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA works in Tamil Nadu

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### Abstract

Employment in the rabi season too is very low since only a few farmers undertake cultivation in this season. So there is a long spell of agricultural inactivity after the kharif season which generally gets over in October. MGNREGA is regarded as the largest public employment programme in the world, assures 100 days of work per year to all rural households, whose adults are willing to do unskilled manual labor at the statutory minimum wage notified for the program. For this study, Panamarathupatty block in Salem district has been selected and the Probability sampling was used for the selection of villages. The ex post facto research design was used for the study, in this regard, researcher has no scope in manipulation of independent variables. The events which has already occurred has been studied. Each scatter plot in the matrix visualizes the relationship between a pair of works in the MGNREGA, allowing many relationships to be explored in one chart. The A-type card holders participate in medium to high level of participation in the MGNREGA works. This medium to high level of participation is due to that, beneficiaries participated more than 50 days of work. The participation of beneficiaries in the grama sabha meetings shows that they are actively involved in discussing the problems, designing new projects and developing the implementation strategies for the project. This active participation ensures the beneficiaries to participate in the part of decision making process for selection of projects in grama sabha. Though participation levels are increased and employment opportunities within the village have brought about some improved visible changes in the beneficiaries livelihood.

**Keywords:** Gramasabha, discussions, MGNREGA, participation, village works

### Introduction

Employment in the rabi season too is very low since only a few farmers undertake cultivation in this season. Very few workers show little willingness to work in rabi crops because of the high level of drudgery involved in these tasks in spite of rabi wages being higher than kharif wages. So there is a long spell of agricultural inactivity after the kharif season which generally gets over in October. In 2006, India embarked on an ambitious attempt to fight rural poverty, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 created a justiciable, right to work for all households in rural India through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in 2009. MGNREGA is regarded as the largest public employment programme in the world, assures 100 days of work per year to all rural households, whose adults are willing to do unskilled manual labor at the statutory minimum wage notified for the program. The most direct and obvious way is by providing extra employment to the rural household and income to the poorest in rural areas. Although the focus is on augmenting wage employment for unskilled labour, it is ambitious in scope and aims to accomplish a number of things. The act envisages, for instance, that the works undertaken will strengthen natural resource management and address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation, and soil erosion, thereby encouraging sustainable development. MGNREGA is a universal public works programme, but it has a strong underlying targeting mechanism because entry into the programme is by self-selection. Self-selection could affect the take-up of the programme and in turn influence labour market dynamics. The Government of India has made a massive financial commitment to this programme. The MGNREGA scheme has high expectations in terms of employment generation, food security, halting migration, alleviation of poverty and overall rural development (Ghosh. J.K, 2011) [2]. It has neither been claimed nor was envisaged that MGNREGA is the key to successful rejuvenation of rural areas of the country that have remained marginalized in the growth process of the country (Thomas, B. and Bhatia, R.,

2012) [7]. The massive numbers of works being undertaken in rural areas have the potential to not only transform the rural economy but also its environment. As quoted by the then Minister for Rural Development, “the Ministry of Rural Development’s (MoRD) Schemes have an immense potential to contribute to the goal of sustainable poverty reduction and efficient use of natural resources, including improved land use planning and management practices” (Shah *et al.* 2012) [6].

**Literature review**

Workers who reported that they preferred to work in the MGNREGA programme is yet another way of expressing that they were not available for work in the casual labour market. Female workers (45.03%) reported that MGNREGA work was not considered as wage labouring in the society, and therefore they preferred to work in MGNREGA as compared to casual labouring (Mohanakumar S, Vipin Kumar R., 2018) [3, 3]. The massive numbers of works being undertaken in rural areas have the potential to not only transform the rural economy but also its environment. As quoted by the then Minister for Rural Development, “the Ministry of Rural Development’s (MoRD) Schemes have an immense potential to contribute to the goal of sustainable poverty reduction and efficient use of natural resources, including improved land use planning and management practices” (Shah *et al.* 2012) [6]. The official data (Ministry of Rural Development,

Government of India website) suggest that the share of women in the total MGNREGA employment in the country progressively increased from 40.65 per cent in 2006–07 to 42.52 per cent in 2007–08 and 47.87 per cent in 2008–09 and 48.80 per cent in 2009–10. Nearly 40 million migrants have returned to villages, there is a significant increase in demand for MGNREGA during the COVID period. Around 2.2 lakh households have completed their 100 days as provided under the Act till the first week of July 2020. In June and July 2020, MGNREGA created half the jobs in all of FY 20 (Dev, S.M., 2020) [1].

**Materials and Methods**

For this study, Panamarathupatty block in Salem district has been selected and the Probability sampling was used for the selection of villages. In this block, five major revenue villages viz., Kammalapatti, Kuralnatham, Nazhikkalpatti, Thumbalpatti and Vazhakkuttapatti were selected with the background of more worksite participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA work. In this view 40 beneficiaries from each village have been selected based on simple random sampling method, thus comprise the sample size of 200 beneficiaries. The number of Beneficiaries for each of the selected villages was chosen by simple random sampling method. The village wise Beneficiaries’ details for the study were furnished in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Selection of study area and respondents

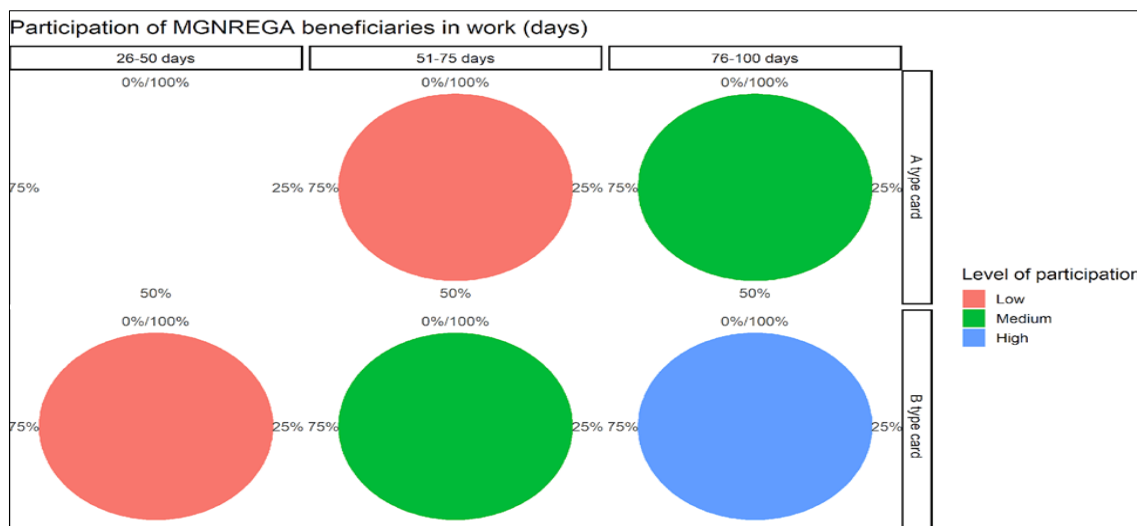
District	Block	Villages	Sample
Salem	Panamarathupatty	Kammalapatti	40
		Kuralnatham	40
		Nazhikkalpatti	40
		Thumbalpatti	40
		Vazhakkuttapatti	40
Total			200

The ex post facto research design was used for the study, thus the researcher has no scope in manipulation of independent variables, as these have already occurred and have been studied. To get a comprehensive understanding, some PRA techniques and personal interview method was employed to collect the required information for the study. A scatter plot matrix is used to grid (or matrix) the extent of participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA works, and used to visualize the bivariate relationships between the combinations of works.

Each scatter plot in the matrix visualizes the relationship between a pair of works in the MGNREGA, allowing many relationships to be explored in one chart.

**Extent of participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA works**

**I. Participation of MGNREGA beneficiaries in work (days)**



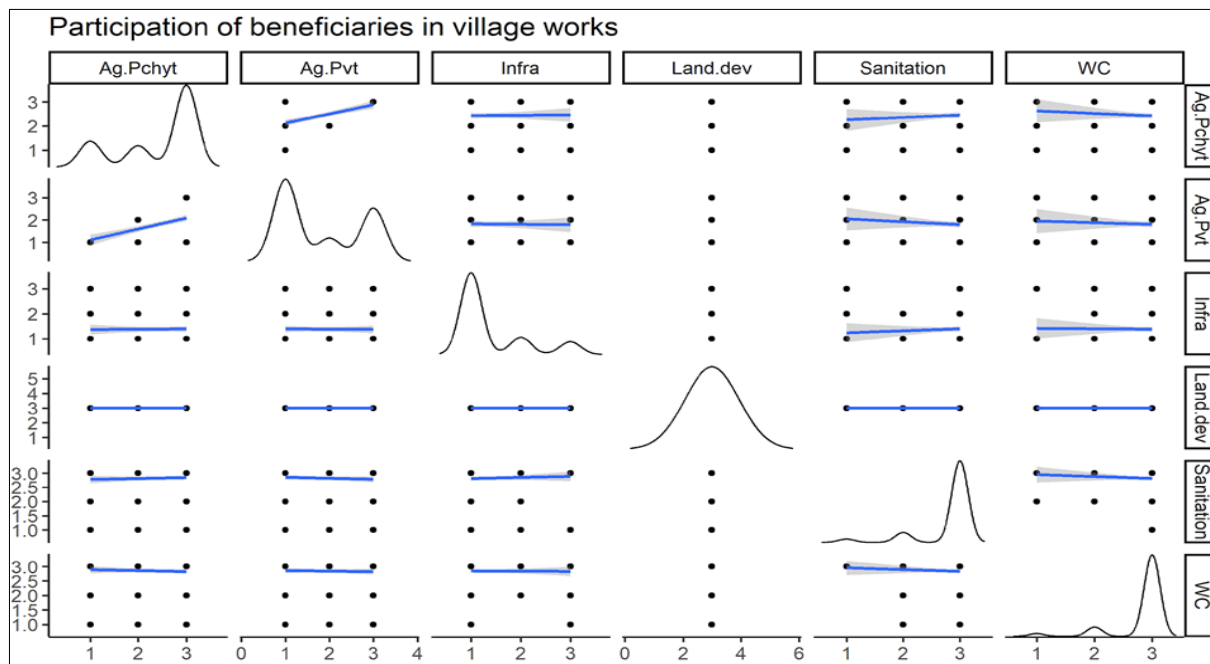
Participation of MGNREGA beneficiaries in work (days)

The graph shows that A-type card holders participate in medium to high levels of participation in the MGNREGA works. This medium to high level of participation is due to that, beneficiaries participated more than 50 days of work. In the A-type card holders, most of the beneficiaries are females, they participated in the MGNREGA works in the non-seasonal times. The B-type card holders are the persons both the male and female, who are the MGNREGA beneficiaries in their family. The B-type card holders participated in low, medium and high levels of participation. Most of the B-type card holders are daily wage earners, they participated in the MGNREGA works for more than 25 days of work in the year. They are going for agricultural works in the seasons, and in the non-seasonal times they are going for the processing

industries and other allied works which is of migratory works is helpful in carryout their livelihood activities. After the lockdown, the migratory works get affected and they are participating more in the MGNREGA works.

**II. Participation of MGNREGA beneficiaries in village works**

The participation of beneficiaries in the village works were measured under six dimensions namely, Agricultural work in panchayat, Agricultural work in private farms, Infrastructure development works, Land development works, Rural Sanitation and Water conservation works. The results of the scalar matrix are discussed below.



Participation of MGNREGA beneficiaries in village works

**Agricultural work in panchayat**

The comparativeness of the agricultural work in panchayat with agricultural work in private farms shows that the curve is increasing in linear manner. The increasing curve in the agricultural work towards the panchayat is a result that, the beneficiaries had a favourable attitude towards the works in the panchayats. In panchayats, the agricultural works carried out are, planting of saplings in the panchayat lands, nursery maintenance and maintenance of backyard gardens in the panchayat institutions. The beneficiaries are also producing the vermicomposts using the wastes in the markets, shandys. The comparativeness of the agricultural work in panchayat with the rural sanitation and water conservation works shows that these works has more participation, when compared to agricultural work in panchayat. The participation of beneficiaries in the land development works is more when compared to the agricultural work in panchayat so the curve is linear.

**Agricultural work in private farms**

The scalar matrix of the agricultural works in the private farms results are discussed, the comparativeness of the agricultural work in the panchayt shows that the participation of beneficiaries is less favourableness in the private farms. This less favourableness is due to that, the beneficiaries works

in the private farms which are counted as work days in the MGNREGA works, so they will lose the work days in the private farms. So this clearly states that, if the number of work days performed in the private farms are not counted means they will favourably do agricultural work in the private

**Agricultural work in private farms**

The scalar matrix of the agricultural works in the private farms results are discussed, the comparativeness of the agricultural work in the panchayt shows that the participation of beneficiaries is less favourableness in the private farms. This less favourableness is due to that, the beneficiaries works in the private farms which are counted as work days in the MGNREGA works, so they will lose the work days in the private farms. So this clearly states that, if the number of work days performed in the private farms are not counted means they will favourably do agricultural work in the private farms. The works carried out in the private farms were construction of soil and stone shores, construction of farm ponds and sheds. The scalar matrix shows that, the comparativeness of the agricultural works in private farms with infrastructure work, rural sanitation and water conservation works, the curve is linearly distributed. This linear distribution is that the beneficiaries had an equal level of participation in these works, when compared with

agricultural work in the private farms. The curve in the land development works is linearly distributed, when compared with the agricultural work in the panchayat.

**Infrastructure development works**

The scalar matrix of the infrastructure work with the agricultural work in panchayat and private farms, rural sanitation and water conservation works has linearly increasing towards the infrastructure work. This linear increase in the participation shows that, the beneficiaries in the MGNREGA works are more skilled on the farm works. In the infrastructure works, the works carried out were construction of walls in the panchayat institutions. In the participation of beneficiaries, the low level of participation in the infrastructure works, this low level of participation is due to that the beneficiaries are more skilled towards farm works. They having less skills in doing the infrastructure works. The comparitiveness of the infrastructure works with land development works, the curve is linear. This linearity is due to that they are well skilled towards the farm works, this might be the reason for the linearity of the curve.

**Land development works**

The scalar matrix of the land development with other dimensions are linearly distributed. This linear distribution is that, the beneficiaries are well skilled towards the farm works. The works carried out in the land development works are, bush clearance works, cutting and removal of fallen trees, land levelling works, construction of water harvesting structures, management of canals and soil conservation works in the panchayat lands. The MGNREGA works starts with the aim of guarantees the 100 days of wage employment in the financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work, the unskilled manual work starts with the land development works. shows that beneficiaries are skilled in the farm works and they have less willingness towards the participation in rural sanitation works. The agricultural works in the private farms and water conservation works are linearly decreasing in the participation

towards the rural sanitation works. This is due to that when compared with these works, the participation are more willingness in the participation of rural sanitation works. The rural saniation works were, cleaning the panchayat institutions, panchayat roads and disinfecting the panchayat areas. For every Saturday, the sanitation works is carried out in the panchayats to disinfecting the crowded areas and cleaning the panchayat areas. The comparitiveness of rural sanitation with land development works the curve is linear, this shows that the beneficiaries are more skilled towards the land development works.

**Rural Sanitation**

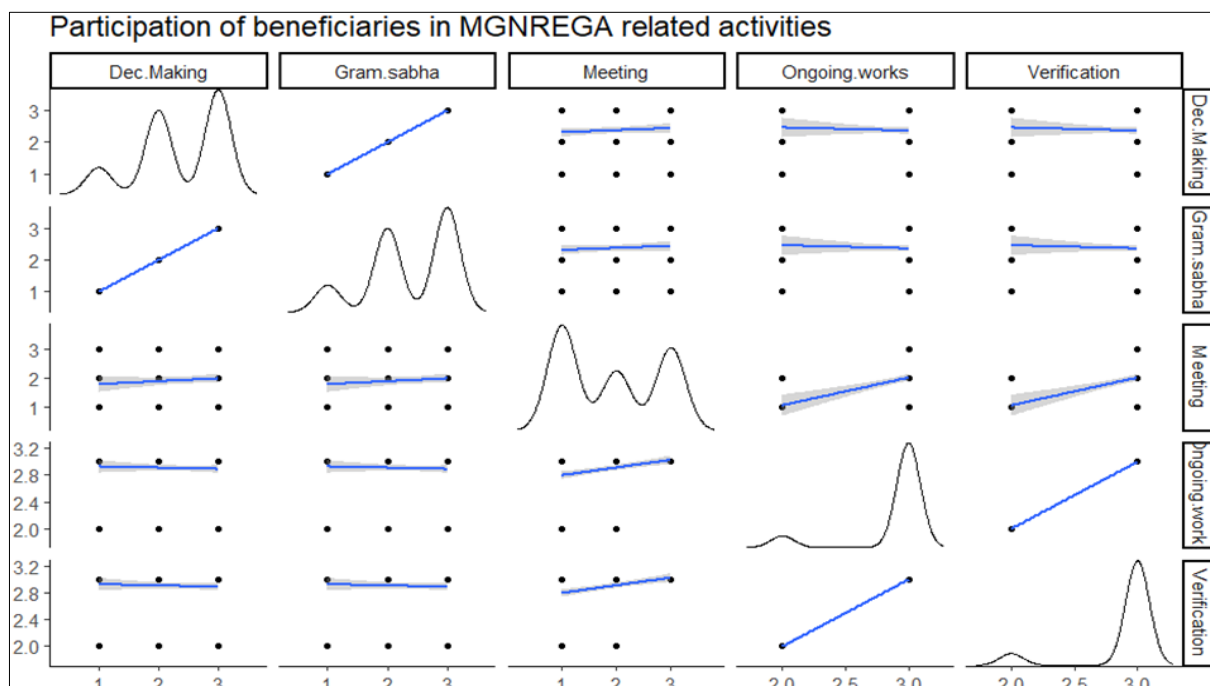
The results of the scalar matrix with the rural sanitation works shows that, the linear increase in the participation of beneficiaries in the agricultural works in panchayat and infrastructure works. This linear increase in participation

**Water conservation works**

The results of the scalar matrix shows that, agricultural works in panchayat and private farms, rural sanitation works shows that the participation of beneficiaries is linearly decreasing towards the water conservation works. This linear decrease is that the beneficiaries had the more willingness in the participation of water conservation works when compared to these works. The water conservation works carried are, construction of water harvesting, soil and moisture conservations, groundwater recharge, flood protection in the flood prone areas, Command area Development and Water Management works are carried.

**III. Participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA related activities**

The participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA related activities were measured under five dimensions viz, Decision making, gram sabha meetings, open project meetings, Scrutiny of records for ongoing works and Verification of job card and NMR register. The results of the scalar matrix were discussed below.



Participation of beneficiaries in MGNREGA related activities

### **Part of decision making for selection of projects in Grama Sabha**

The results of the scalar matrix shows that, the participation of beneficiaries in the part of decision making is linearly increased towards the participation in the scrutiny of records for ongoing works and verifying the job cards & NMR register. The beneficiaries are actively participating in the decision making on selected projects/ discussed projects in the grama sabha meetings, so the matrix is linearly distributed towards the participation in the grama sabha meetings. After the participation of beneficiaries in the MGNREGA, they also participate in the part of decision making process for selection of projects which were discussed in grama sabha meetings. In open project meetings, the beneficiaries had low level of participation comparing to the participation in the part of decision making for selection of projects in grama sabha.

### **Grama sabha meeting**

The participation of beneficiaries in the grama sabha meetings shows that, they are actively involved in discussing the problems, designing new projects and developing the implementation strategies for the project. This active participation ensures the beneficiaries to participate in the part of decision making process for selection of projects in grama sabha. The results show that the beneficiaries are having low level of interest in participation in the open project meetings. In the open project meetings the beneficiaries plays passive role in discussing the issues and designing the projects, tis shows that they having a greater willingness in the participation of grama sabhas. In the grama sabhas they having a greater freedom in discussing the projects and planning the implementation strategies, their peer groups in the grama sabha meetings creates a favourable environment for discussion. The participation of beneficiaries in verifying the job cards & NMR register and scrutiny of records for ongoing projects are having high level of participation when compared to the participation in the grama sabha meetings.

### **Open project meetings**

In open project meetings the beneficiaries participate in the discussion process with the policy makers and rural development officials in designing the projects and thereby planning the implementation strategies for the projects. In this discussion process, beneficiaries participate passively, so the beneficiaries are having least interest in participation in the open project meetings. The result shows that, the participation in verifying the job cards & NMR register and scrutiny of records for ongoing projects are to be high level of participation when compared to participation in open project meetings. The participation of beneficiaries in the decision making process for the part of selection of projects in the grama sabhas are tend to be more level of participation. The participation of grama sabha meetings ensures the active participation in discussing the projects, the grama sabha meetings has greater participation of beneficiaries in designing the projects and the rural development officials acts as a facilitator in the meetings.

### **Verifying job cards & NMR Register**

The results of scalar matrix shows that, beneficiaries participating to verify their workdays and also participating in the verification of their job cards by the rural development officials, the same level of participation is also observed in the scrutiny of records for the ongoing projects. The

participation of beneficiaries in the decision making process, grama sabhas and open project meetings in comparison with the participation in job card verification and NMR register shows that the curve is linearly increasing in the participation towards the job card verification and NMR register.

### **Scrutiny of records for ongoing works**

The results of the scalar matrix shows that the participation of beneficiaries in scrutiny of records for ongoing projects is more when compared to the participation in the decision making process, grama sabhas and open project meetings. The beneficiaries participating actively in the scrutiny process in verifying their records for ongoing works. The same amount of participation in the verification of job cards and NMR register.

### **Conclusion**

The participation of beneficiaries in the grama sabha meetings shows that, they are actively involved in discussing the problems, designing new projects and developing the implementation strategies for the project. This active participation ensures the beneficiaries to participate in the part of decision making process for selection of projects in grama sabha. Decisions regarding MGNREGA schemes are taken up in Gram Sabha meetings, held at the start of the work. Women hardly participated in these meetings earlier, but MGNREGA has given them a chance to be part of these decision making forums. Though participation levels are increased and employment opportunity within the village has brought about some improved visible changes in the beneficiaries livelihood. The beneficiaries' plays active role in the participating in Gram Sabhas, social audits, participatory planning and other means.

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