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THE IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: A Study Conducted in Vijayanagaram District, A.P., India.

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Introduction:

In India, poverty and unemployment have consistently posed significant challenges to the nation's development. A key factor contributing to these social issues is the country's large population. Both underemployment and unemployment have severely hindered the Indian economy. While agriculture remains the primary livelihood for most people, even in years of abundant harvests, Indian farmers often find themselves without work throughout the entire year. (Ghosh, M. (2010). India's rural development initiatives began nearly a century ago with a series of experimental projects. These initiatives were primarily voluntary efforts undertaken by individuals such as Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, S.K. Dey, Spencer Hatch, F.L. Brayne, and others. A thorough evaluation of rural development initiatives in India necessitates an examination of these early experiments (Gaikwad, 1986). The various rural development programs can be categorized into four main phases: 1. Early experiments during the pre-independence period (1920-1946), 2. Subsequent experiments in the post-independence period (1947-1960), 3. Wage employment programs starting from 1960, and 4. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) initiated in 2005.

Background of the MGNREGA Scheme:

A distinctive and extensive wage employment initiative, markedly different in its approach, meticulously designed, and thoroughly comprehensive, known as the NREGA program was social welfare program established and renamed MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) in October 2009, with the official notification occurring on July 30, 2010, in honour of Mahatma Gandhi, the nation's founding figure. Currently, MGNREGA is operational across all 644 rural districts in India and is sometimes referred to as Mahatma Gandhi NREGA. This program stands out from previous rural development initiatives due to its unique structure and operational framework, marking it as the first rural development program established through an Act of Parliament. The NREGA 2005 was unanimously approved by Parliament in August 2005, officially notified on September 7, 2005, and became effective on February 2, 2006, initially targeting 200 of the most disadvantaged districts in the country. The scheme guarantees 100 days of wage employment per financial year for every household whose adult members are willing to engage in unskilled manual labour. MGNREGA is an ambitious initiative aimed at generating and sustaining income and consumption in rural India. The 73rd amendment to the Constitution in 1992 empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by granting them constitutional status through the introduction of Article 243 and the addition of a new eleventh schedule. This amendment facilitated democratic decentralization in rural India, marking a significant advancement in empowering rural communities. The scheme operates on a demand-driven basis, meaning that employment is granted to individuals based on their requests for work, rather than being determined by the government. The program is implemented by Gram Panchayats, with funds being directly transferred to the workers' bank accounts. The Act ensures a legal right to unskilled manual work for any registered adult in rural areas who applies for employment, mandating that work be provided within fifteen days of the application. Should this not occur, the individual is entitled to

receive compensation in the form of an unemployment allowance as stipulated by MGNREGA.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), was officially inaugurated by the Prime Minister on February 2, 2006, in the Ananthpur District of Andhra Pradesh. This initiative emerged in response to a significant grassroots movement involving individuals, non-governmental organizations, civil rights advocates, farmers, labourers, and various other groups advocating for the Right to Work for rural populations. Prominent civil activists such as Aruna Roy, Jean Dreze, and Nikhil Dey played key roles in the campaign to establish a program aimed at providing employment for rural residents. Given the prevailing socio-economic challenges, the concept of an employment guarantee garnered backing from civil society, researchers, and intellectuals, including notable figures like Amartya Sen, Jean Dreze, Reetika Khera, and Karuna Muthiah, among others. MGNREGA has emerged as a significant tool for fostering inclusive growth in rural India, positively influencing social protection, livelihood security, and democratic governance (Shah, 2012, pg.1).

Impact of MGNREGA:

The MGNREGA program marked its tenth anniversary on February 2, 2016, and has garnered significant attention as the largest public employment initiative globally. It has received extensive media coverage, with major newspapers and journals frequently publishing articles and research on different facets of the program. Initially, some economists dismissed MGNREGA as merely a form of welfare or subsidy plagued by corruption and favouritism; however, over time, their views have been challenged. The program now offers wage employment to over 5 crore rural households throughout the nation.

Theoretical Framework:

Social theory comprises a framework of interrelated concepts that structures and synthesizes our understanding of the social environment. There is no universally recognized model or theory of rural development capable of elucidating the current dynamics of rural development or forecasting its future trajectory (Singh, 2009).

Gandhian Model of Rural Development:

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, widely recognized as Mahatma Gandhi, is celebrated not only for his pivotal role in India's struggle for independence, earning him the title of "Father of the Nation," but also for his profound perspectives on rural development. Gandhi's vision for rural advancement was centred on the people and embraced a comprehensive approach, grounded in his principles of truth, non-violence, and the inherent goodness of humanity (Singh, 2009). He asserted that the essence of India resides in its villages rather than its urban centers. Gandhi viewed the exploitation of villages by urban residents as a form of violence. He advocated for a lifestyle characterized by simplicity and elevated thought, emphasizing the voluntary curtailment of material desires and the adherence to moral and spiritual values. The Gandhian framework for rural development was founded on the concept of a self-sustaining village economy, or gram-swaraj, the dignity of labour, the promotion of swadeshi (indigenous) production, as well as the principles of truth and non-violence. It also called for the decentralization of both economic and political authority and the encouragement of khadi and village industries.

Development Theory:

The notion of social development, as articulated by M.S.A. Rao, encompasses economic development; however, it distinguishes itself by focusing on the comprehensive advancement of society, which includes economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions (Singh, 2010). This research study evaluates the MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh from a developmental theoretical standpoint and it serves as a rural development initiative aimed at fostering social progress in rural India. The notion of development emerged in academic discourse during the mid-20th century. Its complex and multifaceted nature has posed challenges for scholars attempting to establish a singular, comprehensive definition of development. Prominent proponents of this theory include W. Arthur Lewis, Andre Gunder Frank, Gunnar Myrdal, Rosenstein-Rodan, Harvey Leibenstein, among others. Development can be viewed through four primary lenses: 1. Economic growth, 2. Human development, 3. Social development, and 4. Sustainable development. While this study on MGNREGA is shaped by all four perspectives, it is predominantly guided by the social development viewpoint. The significance of social development has increased as developing nations have sought to achieve progress.

Subaltern Perspective:

The subaltern perspective represents a novel concept and methodology that emphasizes the experiences of workers and beneficiaries of the MGNREGA, predominantly comprising individuals from marginalized and historically disadvantaged communities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This study aims to explore the viewpoints of these marginalized groups, who have often been overlooked and labelled as backward communities. The beneficiaries of MGNREGA primarily include impoverished individuals, those from backward classes, members, and women. Consequently, their opinions and insights will be integral to this research. The sentiments, requirements, ideas, and aspirations of this demographic are frequently disregarded. Therefore, the theoretical foundation of this study is anchored in the aforementioned three theoretical frameworks, alongside Mahatma Gandhi's principles regarding villages and rural development, as outlined in the Gandhian model of rural development. This theoretical framework illustrates the extensive social foundation of the program, which continues to evolve and adapt to the changing dynamics of rural life across India.

Evolution of the MGNREGA Scheme in India:

The MGNREGA was enacted by the Indian Parliament on August 25, 2005, with its official announcement occurring on September 7, 2005. The program commenced in 2006 across 200 districts and was extended to encompass all rural areas in India by 2008. Below is a timeline of the MGNREGA's development in India. Initially, the scheme was launched in 200 districts, aiming to guarantee rural households a minimum of 100+50 days of employment each year. The program started with a budget allocation of INR 11,300 crore. Subsequently, it was expanded to include an additional 130 and 330 districts, with the budget increased to INR 16,000 crore. Ultimately, MGNREGA was extended to cover all rural communities in India, and the budget was further raised to INR 30,000 crore. The funding for the initiative has been increased to INR 39,100 crore, while the budget for the overall plan has been elevated to INR 40,100 crore. The program has been expanded to encompass all districts across the country. Additionally, the allocation for MGNREGA has been raised to INR 33,000 crore. The primary aim of the project is to improve rural infrastructure and create sustainable assets. The budget for MGNREGA has remained consistent with the previous year, totalling INR 33,000 crore. The strategy has been enhanced through the implementation of geo-tagging, which aims to foster greater transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the initiative has renewed its focus on improving the quality of the assets generated through the program. The allocation for MGNREGA has now increased to INR 34,000 crore.

The strategy established the National Electronic Fund Management System (NEFMS) to ensure timely and transparent salary disbursements. The funding for the MGNREGA has risen to INR 34,699 crore. Additionally, the program launched the "Mission Antyodaya" initiative aimed at identifying and prioritizing the most disadvantaged families in rural areas. The allocation for MGNREGA has further increased to INR 47,499 crore. The initiative also introduced the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to create sustainable assets in rural communities, with MGNREGA funding now at INR 48,000 crore. Furthermore, the "Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana" was initiated to enhance transportation services in remote rural areas, raising the MGNREGA allocation to INR 55,000 crore. The "National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) Convergence" initiative was launched to provide a social safety net for the rural poor, with MGNREGA funding increasing to INR 60,000 crore. A program was also initiated to enhance water security in rural areas through the "Water Conservation and Management" plan, resulting in an increase of MGNREGA funding to INR 61,500 crore. Lastly, the "Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan" was introduced to create employment opportunities for migrant workers who returned to rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Role of the MGNREGA Scheme in Andhra Pradesh:

The MGNREGA has been enacted throughout all states and Union Territories in India. Nonetheless, the extent of benefits derived from the scheme varies among states, influenced by factors such as poverty levels, population density, and the demand for rural employment. Andhra Pradesh stands out as one of the states that has reaped substantial benefits from the MGNREGA scheme. This initiative has been instrumental in tackling the significant issues of poverty and unemployment prevalent in the rural regions of the state. Below are several ways in which the MGNREGA scheme has impacted Andhra Pradesh in comparison to other states. According to the Ministry of Rural Development, during the fiscal year 2020-21, a total of 82.29 lakh households in Andhra Pradesh utilized the MGNREGA scheme, marking the highest figure among all Indian states. Additionally, the state recorded the greatest number of person-days of work, totalling 279.98 crore, during the same timeframe. The MGNREGA scheme has also provided essential income support to a considerable number of households in Andhra Pradesh. In the financial year 2020-21, the average wage rate under the scheme in the state was Rs. 218, surpassing the national average of Rs. 202.

Andhra Pradesh has effectively utilized the MGNREGA scheme to develop various assets, such as rural roads, bridges, and structures for water conservation. During the fiscal year 2020-21, the state established 14,263 water conservation structures, constructed 15,417 rural roads, and built 1,966 culverts and bridges through this initiative. The MGNREGA scheme has notably enhanced women's participation in the workforce within Andhra Pradesh. According to the Ministry of Rural Development, the proportion of women engaged in the scheme in the state reached 52.69 percent in 2020-21, surpassing the national average of 50.71 percent. Furthermore, the MGNREGA scheme has offered vital livelihood support to numerous landless and marginal farmers in the region. In the same fiscal year, the state provided employment to 32.47 lakh agricultural labourers and 10.13 lakh marginal farmers under this program. Overall, the MGNREGA scheme has been instrumental in elevating the socio-economic conditions of rural households in Andhra Pradesh. It has generated employment, offered income support, and created livelihood opportunities for many households, particularly those of landless and marginal farmers. Additionally, it has contributed to the development of rural assets, fostered women's empowerment, and improved water availability for agricultural purposes.

Review of Literature:

- Aggarwal, Ankita (2016) Another study of MGNREGA in Jharkhand by titled "The MGNREGA Crises: Insights from Jharkhand" deals with various challenges faced by the programme.
- Banerjee and Saha (2010) demonstrated that Chhattisgarh outperformed Jharkhand and Orissa regarding the duration of employment and the wage received. Following the implementation of MGNREGA, the cost of agriculture increased due to utilizing inputs such as chemical fertilizers and high-yielding varieties that were not previously used.
- Chakraborty (2022) "Pandemic and Delayed Payments under MGNREGS: A Case Study of West Bengal" discusses about the severity of delay in MGNREGA wage payments.
- Chandranayak et al. (2010) undertook a study to evaluate the execution of MGNREGA processes and procedures in Orissa. The econometric findings suggest that all other factors being equal, women are more inclined to demonstrate an interest in MGNREGS works.
- Hanumantha Rao (2014) Study suggests that although the NREGA may have a moderate effect on reducing overall poverty, it significantly decreases the severity of poverty for the households benefiting from the program.
- Hirway I. and Batabyal S. (2012) highlighted MGNREGS's impact on women in Moyasa Village, Gujarat and found that MGNREGS has also contributed to time pressure and struggle for women.
- Kalpesh Kumar A.C. and Rajdeep Singha (2016) conducted a study on the influence of MGNREGA on individuals within the livelihood framework, encompassing five key dimensions.
- Leelavathi and K H Rao (2010) conducted a field survey in 2006-07 in four districts of A.P. They estimated the performance of MGNREGS-A.P. using 23 indicators. Differences in performance were identified between districts. The MGNREGS program in Andhra Pradesh was assessed to have an overall effectiveness score of 43.68 per cent, which is considered modest.
- Mishra, S. K., and Bhatt, S. (2020), Study on the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme in India.
- Natraj, V. K., and Madhushree, S. D. (2021), study investigates the influence of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on women's empowerment in Tamil Nadu.
- Padma (2015), the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme in Andhra Pradesh is the sole program extensively implemented throughout the state.
- Ranware et al. (2015) conducted a study titled "MGNREGA works and their impacts A study of Maharashtra" on the basis of survey of 4881 users of more than 4100 works created under MGNREGA in Maharashtra.
- Sharan et al. (2015) did a study "NREGS in Rajasthan". The study tries to analyse why after initial success the programme it started falling after 2010 in Rajasthan.
- Sharma (2015), The study carried across three districts and 47 village panchayats across reveals that while Gram Panchayats were instrumental in taking NREGA to the workers doorstep, they however have not succeeded in educating workers about their entitlements.
- Singh, A. K., and Singh, S. K. (2019), study aims to evaluate the influence of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on rural livelihoods in Uttar Pradesh.
- Tara Kumari and Masenamm (2013) revealed that the MGNREG scheme is a tangible commitment on the part of the government to protect people with low incomes and earn a minimum wage without loss of dignity.
- Thomas E.M. (2018) conducted a study to assess the efficacy of the National Rural Employment Guarantee

Scheme as a wage employment system in combating corruption, as well as its influence on the empowerment of women in rural areas.

Tiwari R et al. (2017) analysed "MGNREGS for Environmental Resource Enhancement and Vulnerability Reduction: Rapid Evaluation in the District of Chitradurga, Karnataka" by contrasting the pre-and post-NREGS condition of natural resources and production systems and by the vulnerability assessed using the Global Vulnerability Index.

Velu Suresh Kumar (2011), the village has accomplished the objective of MGNREGA, which is to catalyse sustainable development in the agricultural economy by enhancing the natural resources foundation.

Venkadesh Boopathy (2012) study highlights the significant impact of efforts to transform rural livelihoods in India, ranking them among the most potent endeavours of their kind. The MGNREGA is beneficial for workers in enhancing their economic circumstances.

Need of the Study:

The MGNREGA has emerged as a significant tool for fostering inclusive growth in rural India, influencing social protection, livelihood security, and democratic governance. Its implementation marked a transformative moment in India's history of generating wage employment, characterized by unique features such as a grassroots approach, rights-based framework, demand responsiveness, and self-selection. This initiative stands as the largest wage employment program ever established in the country. The primary aim of MGNREGA is to ensure that every rural household, regardless of caste or gender, can access a minimum of 100 days of work, provided that adult members are willing to engage in unskilled manual labour as needed, thereby facilitating the creation of high-quality and durable productive assets.

Objectives of the Study:

The research encompasses a variety of objectives, aiming to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation, effectiveness, and social implications of MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh. The goal is to offer policy recommendations for enhancing its execution and overall impact. This study will also explore the distinctive social structure of Andhra Pradesh and seek to understand the involvement of rural communities in the execution of development initiatives such as MGNREGA.

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the performance and execution of MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To investigate the socio-economic and demographic conditions of the beneficiaries.
3. To assess the effects of MGNREGA on female beneficiaries.
4. To determine the effectiveness of the program in generating employment and reducing poverty in marginalized communities.
5. To offer policy recommendations and strategies for enhancing the performance and implementation of MGNREGA in Kothavalasa Mandal, Andhra Pradesh.

Hypotheses:

H0: There is no significant difference in the growth of the MGNREGA scheme at the national, state, or district levels.

H0: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic factors of beneficiaries and the implementation of MGNREGA schemes.

H0: The MGNREGA program does not have a significant effect on improving the living standards of selected respondents in terms of income and employment opportunities.

Research Methodology:

This research proposal employs an exploratory and descriptive research design as its methodological framework. The study focuses on the systematic observation and analysis of MGNREGA beneficiaries, who were randomly selected using a stratified sampling technique. Both primary and secondary data related to the MGNREGA program have been utilized in this research. The geographical scope of the study encompasses the rural regions of Andhra Pradesh. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was introduced in Andhra Pradesh in 2006 and was subsequently rolled out across all 24 districts in a phased manner. The program underwent gradual implementation until 2009, when it was rebranded as MGNREGA. For this study, the Kothavalasa Mandal, district of Vijayanagaram has been intentionally chosen due to its classification as a backward district within the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Research Design:

Much like an architect who creates a blueprint prior to commencing construction, a researcher formulates a plan before initiating a research project. A research design serves as a strategic framework for the proposed study, offering a structured approach to guide the researcher in maintaining focus and ensuring progress in the right direction. In essence, it outlines the methodology and framework of the investigation, designed to yield answers to the research questions. The design represents a detailed depiction of the various

stages involved in the research process. Research endeavours commence with the development of a research design.

Methods of Data Collection:

The process of data collection commences once a research problem has been established. The necessary data has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. This study primarily relies on two types of data: 1. Primary data and 2. Secondary data. The primary data was obtained through various techniques. An initial information schedule was developed and utilized to gather insights from the beneficiaries of the MGNREGA scheme. The interview schedule was designed with the study's objectives and hypotheses in mind. Individual interviews were conducted with beneficiaries from the Kothavalasa Mandal, Vijayanagaram district. Secondary data was sourced from annual reports, official records, academic journals, research reports, and unpublished materials.

Sample Method:

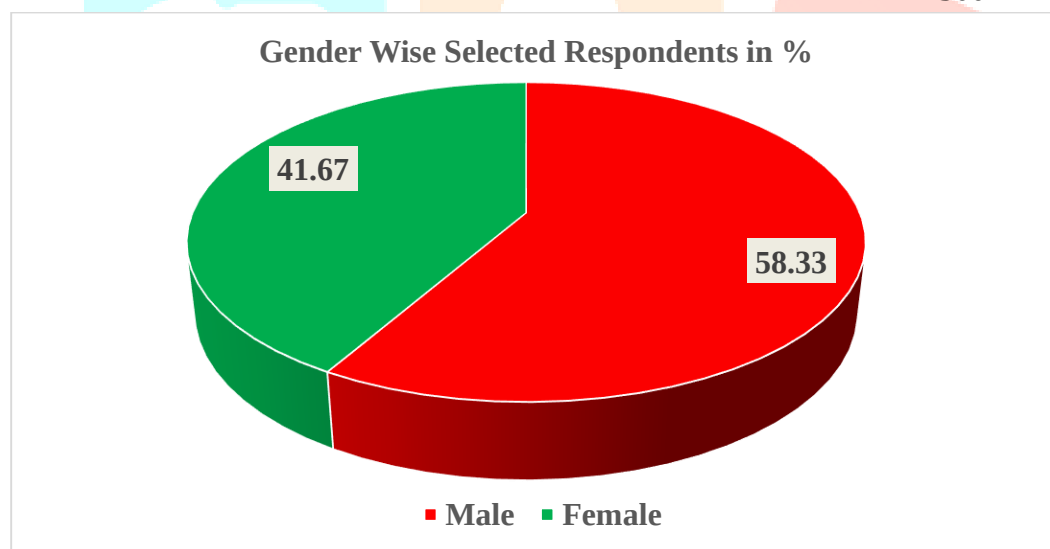
This study employed a Simple Random sampling approach to gather a total of 300 samples from participants in the MGNREGA scheme within the Kothavalasa Mandal, Vijayanagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. Given its importance, the research has collected relevant developmental information for the purposes of this study.

Data Analysis

1. Gender of the Respondents

The analysis of respondent gender (see Table 1) was conducted based on data collected from 300 beneficiaries of MGNREGA. It was found that 41.67 percent (125) of the respondents were female, while 58.33 percent (175) were male.

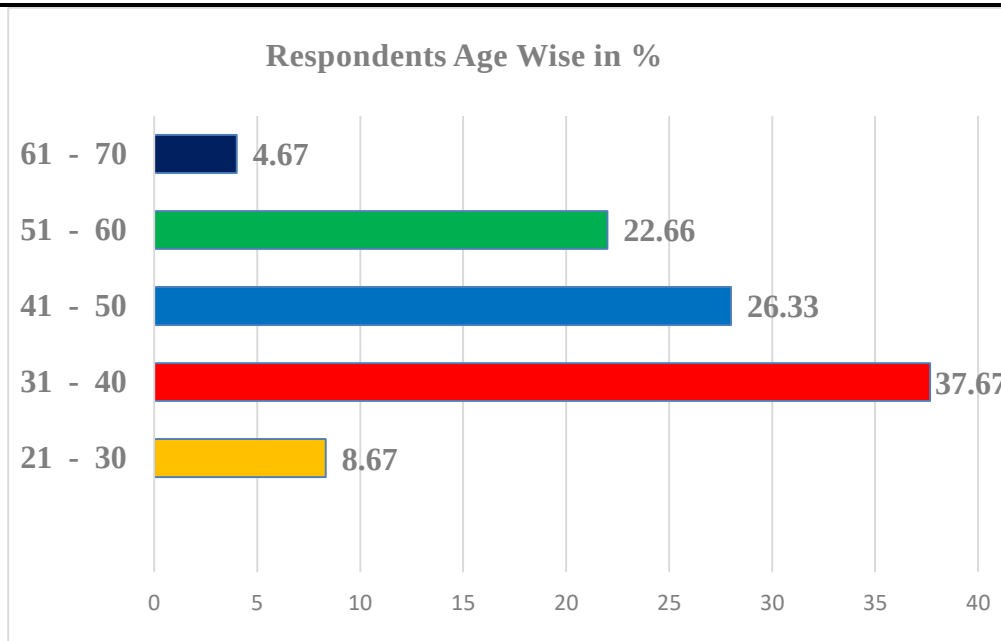
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2. Age of the Respondents

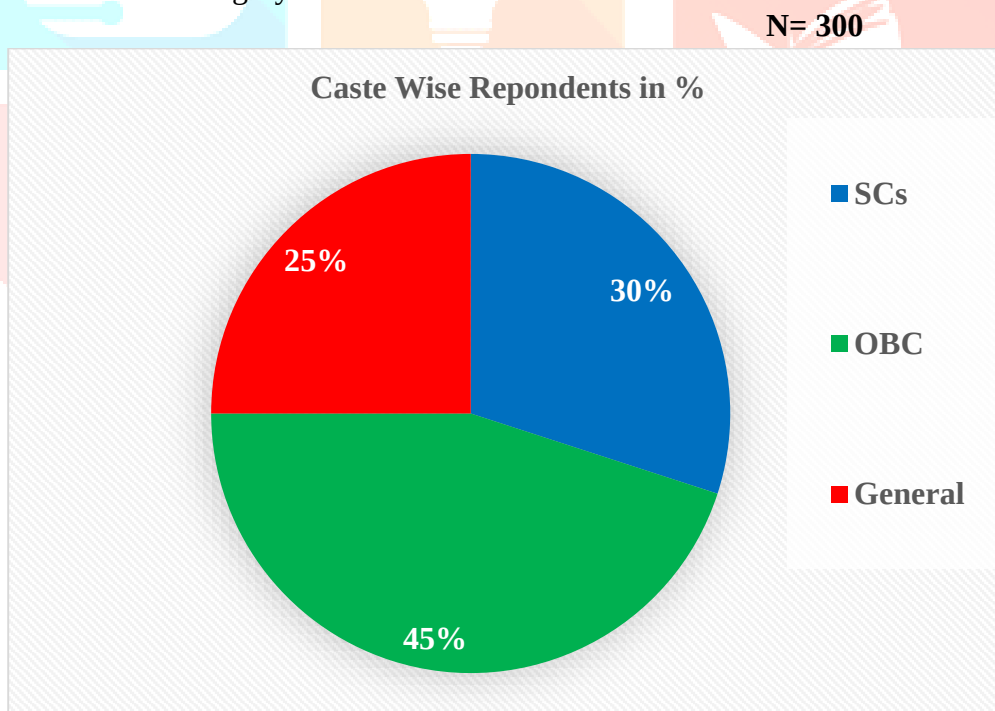
The analysis revealed that the majority of beneficiaries fell within the age range of 31 to 60 years (see Table 2). The study focused on individuals actively participating in MGNREGA worksites, with a requirement of at least 20 days of work at job sites within a year for respondents to qualify for inclusion. It was found that 86.66 percent of the respondents, totalling 250 out of 300, belonged to the 31-60 age group. This age range is typically when individuals have the highest levels of physical energy and strength, which explains why approximately 87 percent (250) of MGNREGA workers are from this demographic. Additionally, some younger individuals were also present at MGNREGA worksites, comprising 8.67 percent (26) of respondents aged 21 to 30. This highlights the appeal of MGNREGA as a rural employment program for young, able-bodied individuals seeking work for subsistence and income. Furthermore, a small number of senior citizens over 60 years old were involved in MGNREGA activities, with 4.67 percent (14) of respondents aged 61 to 70. However, due to the physically demanding nature of most MGNREGA jobs, older adults may find it challenging to participate in such work.

N= 300



3. Caste of the Respondents

The respondents in this study were classified into caste categories: General, OBC, and SC, along with their specific castes or sub-castes (see Table 3). Extensive research has been conducted on the institution of caste and its effects on individuals, society, and social behaviour. It was noted that the majority of respondents in the General category belong to upper castes or sub-castes. For the Scheduled Castes category, most respondents identified as belonging to the Mala and Madiga sub-castes. In the OBC category, respondents primarily came from upper castes or sub-castes. Overall, the distribution of respondents showed that 25 percent (75) were from the General category, 30 percent (90) from the SC category, and 45 percent (135) from the OBC category.

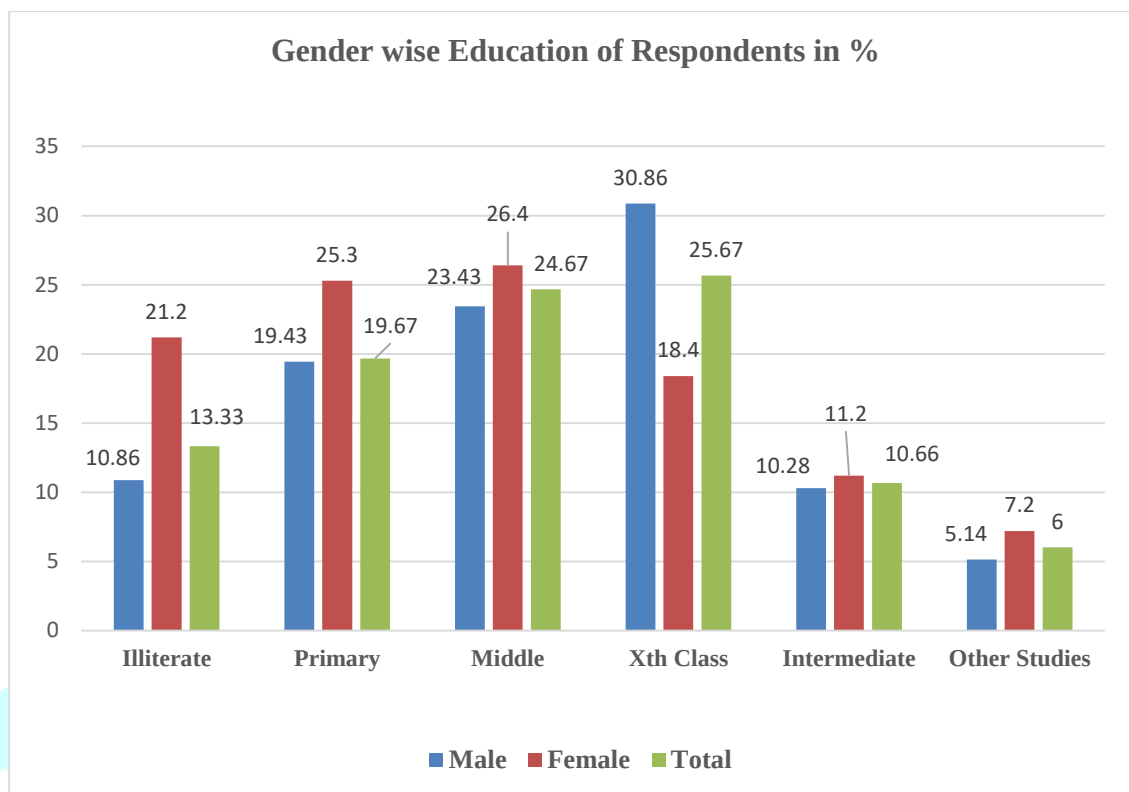


4. Gender wise Education of Respondents

Education has acquired a lot of importance in modern times and recently the country's Parliament has also passed the Right to Education Act popularly known as RTE which makes education from 5 to 14 years compulsory for all. The education criteria for the respondents starting from illiterate to any other is divided into six categories. The data shows that 86.77 per cent of the respondents have only done their education in the schools that is primary, middle matric and secondary level. The relationship between gender and education was also studied (Table 4) and it was seen that male are more educated than women among the various respondents. There are 89.14 per cent (175) literate males compared to 78.80 per cent (125)

literate females. It also shows that more females are illiterate than males and there are more men than women in every literate category. This suggests that male education is given more priority compared to female education in the study area, which is a fact and a social reality of rural India.

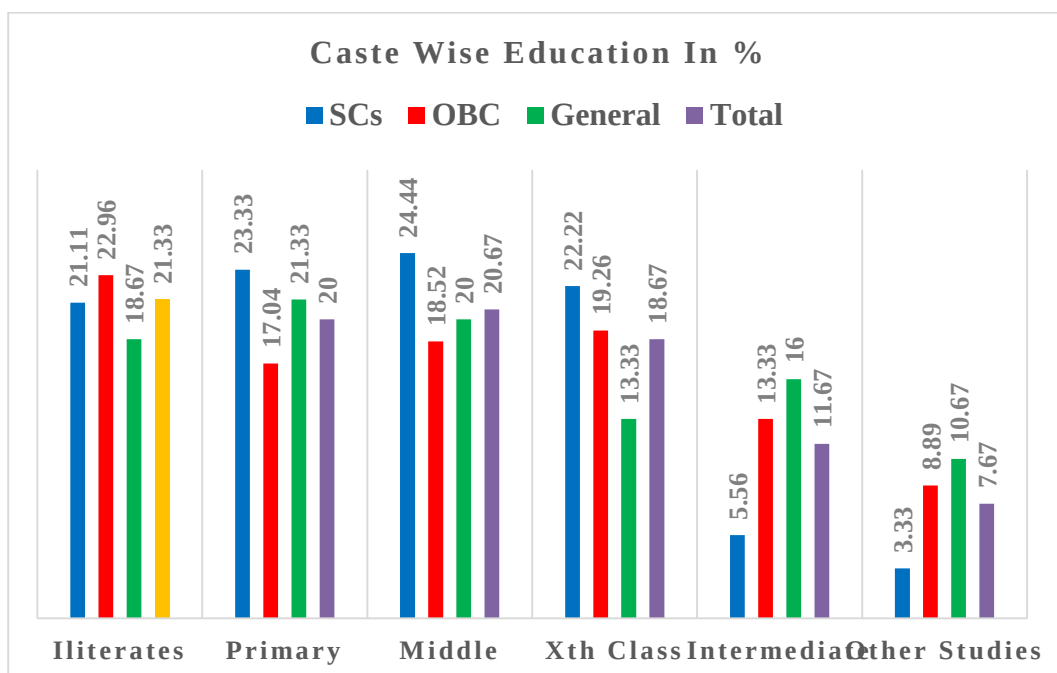
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5. Caste - Wise Educational Qualifications

The educational qualifications of beneficiaries categorized by caste (see Table 5) reveal important literacy data. The OBC category boasts a literacy rate of 77.04 percent, while the General category has a literacy rate of 81.33 percent (61 individuals), and the SC category shows the lowest literacy rate at 78.89 percent (71 individuals). The data indicates that the OBC group has the highest percentage of individuals who completed the Tenth grade, at 19.26 percent, followed closely by the General category with 21.33 percent at the primary level, and the SC category, which has only 22.22 percent who are matriculates. Overall, while the General category shows lower educational attainment, it is evident that the educational standards among the OBC category are generally higher than those of both the SC and General categories.

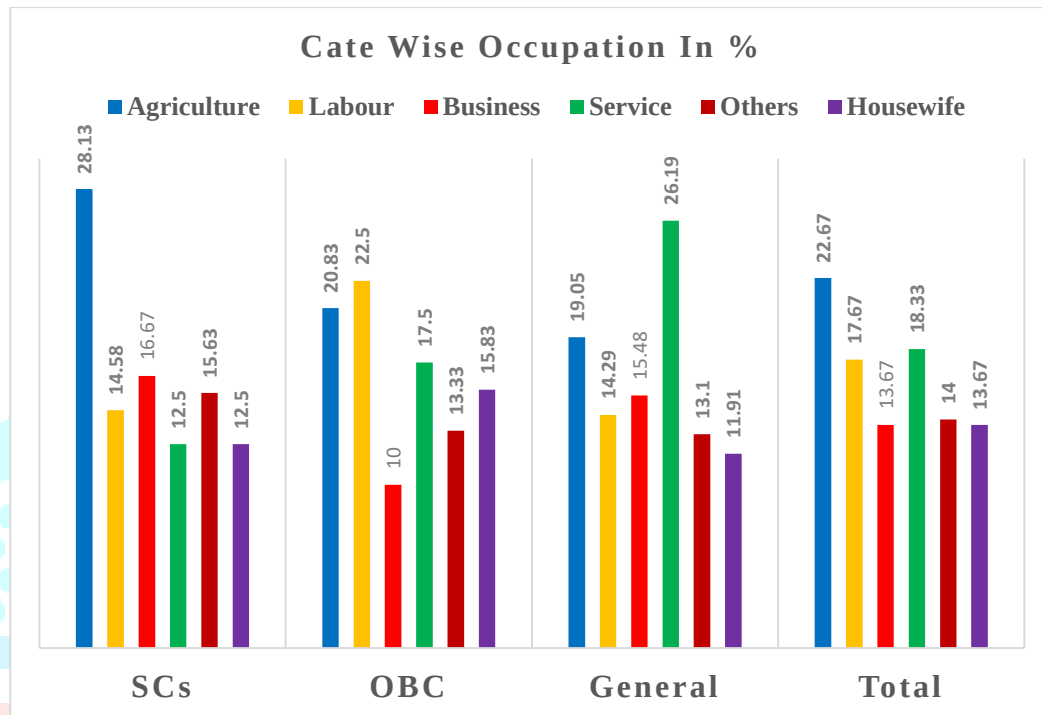
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6. Caste - Wise Occupational Status of Respondents

The occupational status of respondents categorized by caste (see Table 6) reveals that Agriculture is the predominant occupation, accounting for 22.67 percent (68) across all caste groups. Notably, all OBC respondents identified Agriculture as their primary occupation, with 28.83 percent (25) engaged in agriculture and 22.50 percent (27) in labour. The second most common occupation is that of housewife, representing 15.83 percent (19) of beneficiaries in the General and SC categories. Additionally, there are a few beneficiaries from the SC and General categories who engage in minor occupations such as labour services and business.

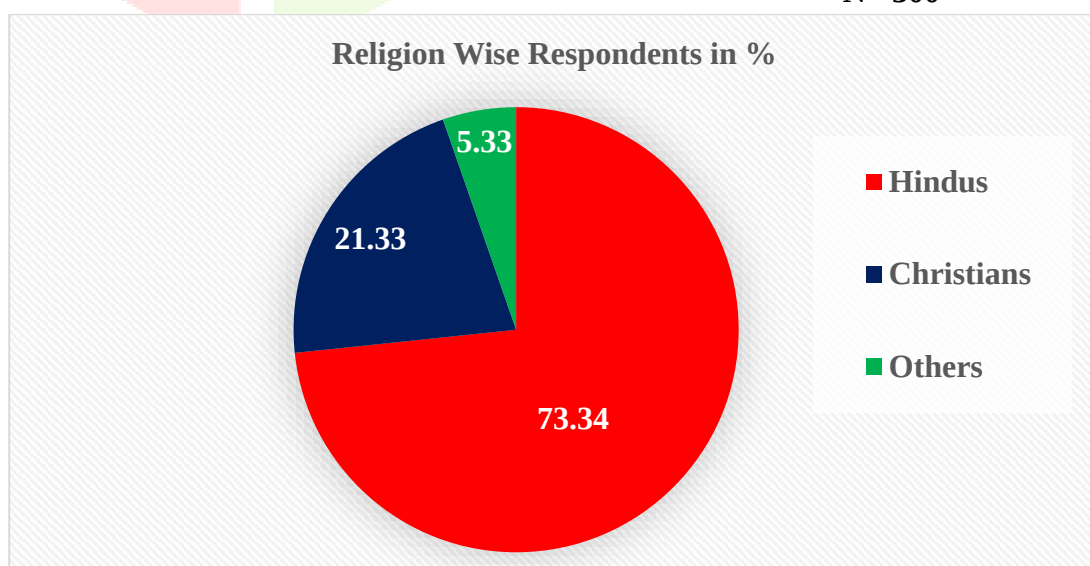
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7. Religion of the Respondents

The majority of respondents in this study identify as Hindu (see Table 7), although 16 respondents belong to the Muslim and other communities. This suggests that the study primarily included Hindu participants. In Andhra Pradesh, the population is predominantly Hindu, with 70 percent adhering to Hinduism, 24.67 percent identifying as Christian, and 5.33 percent following other religions.

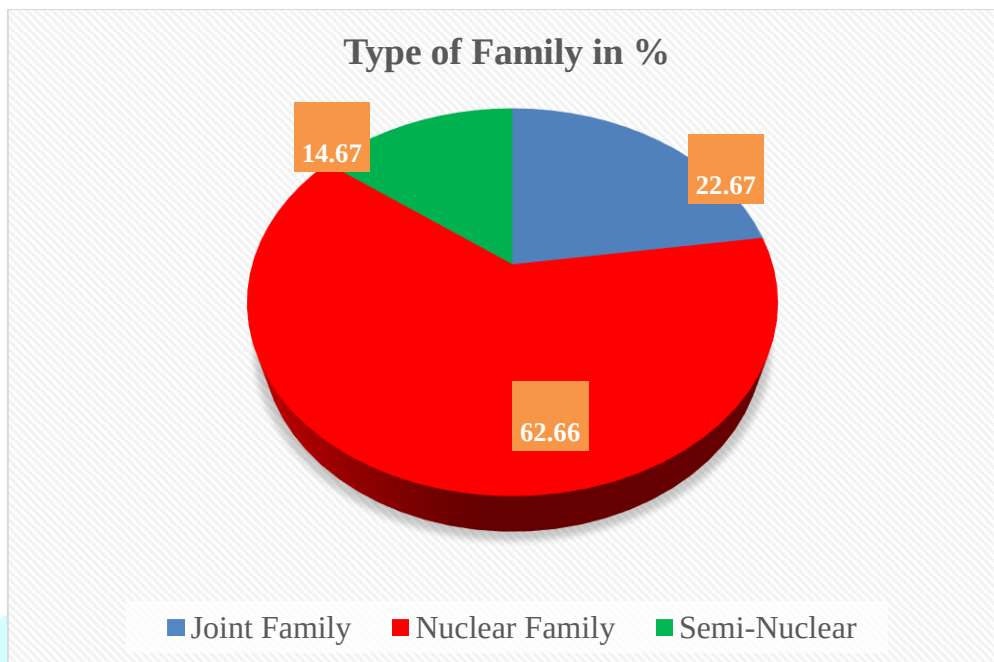
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8. Family Type of the Respondents

The information pertaining to families of the respondents or beneficiaries, whether they are joint or nuclear and number of members in the family (Table 8) was sought. It was reported by 62.66 percent (188) beneficiaries that their families are nuclear whereas 22.67 per cent (68) beneficiaries indicated their families as joint family and 14.67 percent (44) are semi nuclear family.

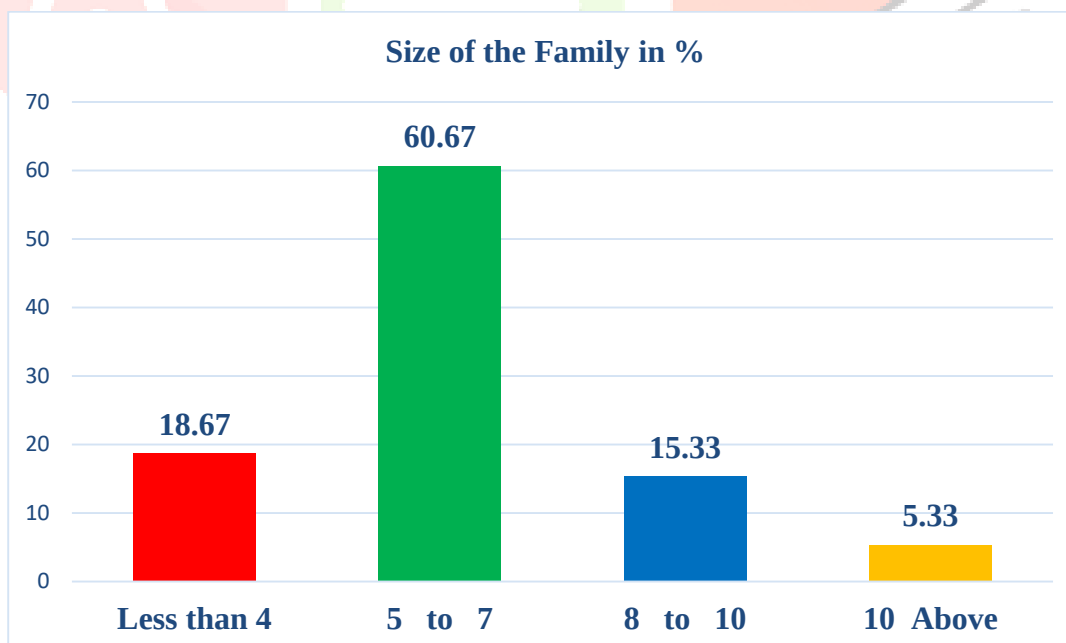
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9. Family Details of the Respondents

As per the information given by beneficiaries (Table 9) it was found that most of the families, about 60.67 per cent (182) were of small or medium size ranging from 5 - 8 members and 79.34 per cent (238) families were having 8 or less members. The information further revealed that 20.66 per cent (62) families had 9 -11 members which could be categorized as big sized families.

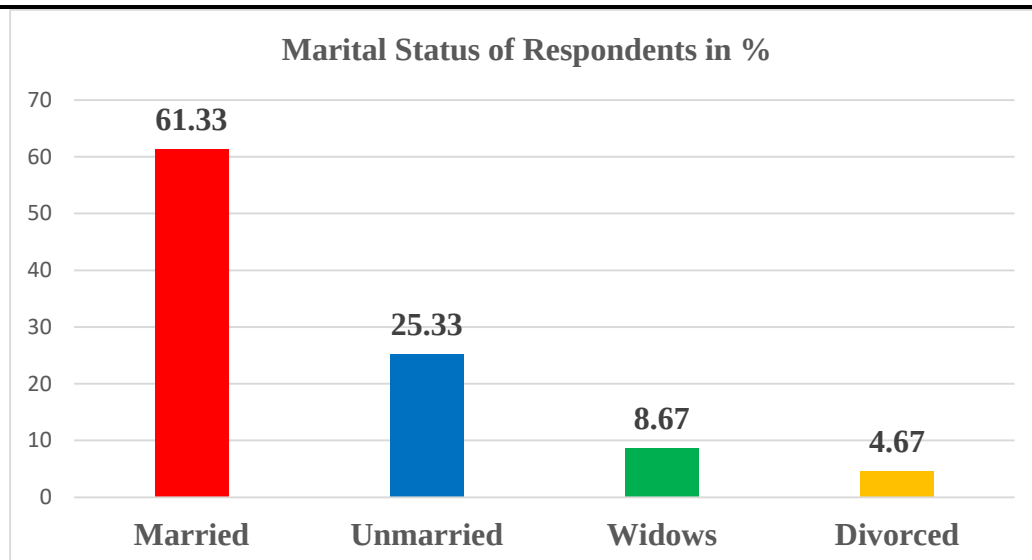
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10. Marital Details of the Respondents

Marriage is considered a vital social institution, particularly in rural areas. Data on the marital status of respondents (see Table 10) reveals that a significant majority, 61.33 percent, or 184 out of 300, are married. Unmarried respondents account for 25.33 percent (76). Additionally, there are instances of divorce, with 4.67 percent (14) of beneficiaries reporting this status, and 8.67 percent (26) of respondents overall.

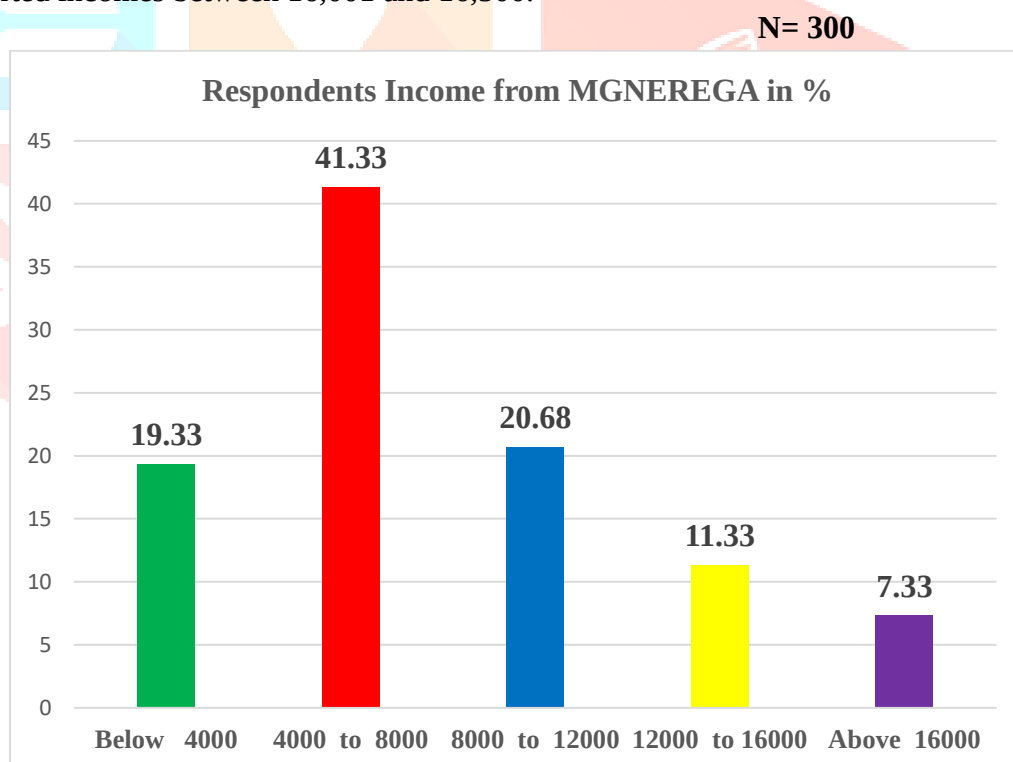
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11. Income of Beneficiaries from Mgnrega

The information gathered from respondents focuses on the critical issue of income, which holds significant importance in today's materialistic and consumer-driven society. The income data was categorized into MGNREGA income, income from other sources, and total income, which is the sum of the two aforementioned categories.

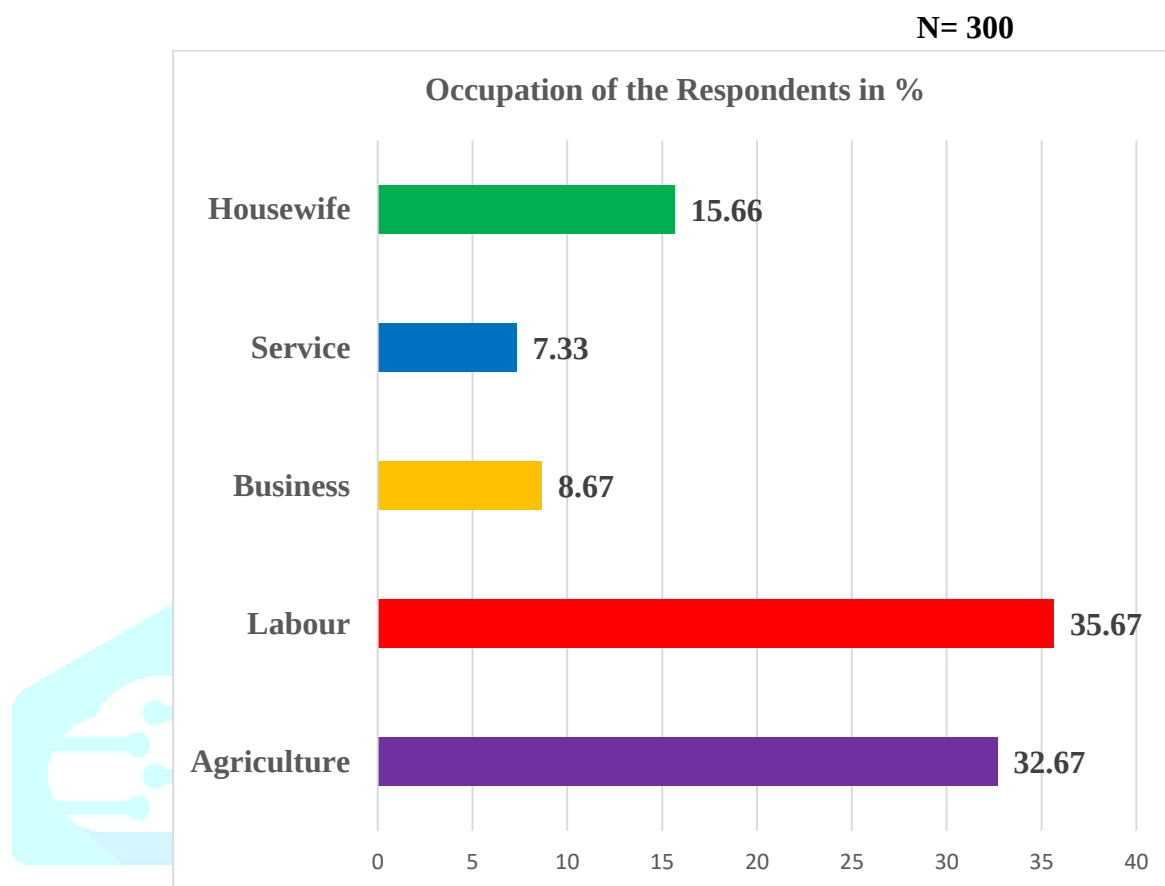
The income levels of MGNREGA beneficiaries varied considerably (see Table 11). It was found that 19.33 percent (58) of beneficiaries earned between 3,000 and 4,000. The largest group, comprising 41.33 percent (124) of beneficiaries, reported incomes ranging from 4,001 to 8,000. Additionally, 20.68 percent (62) had incomes between 8,001 and 12,000, 11.33 percent (34) earned between 12,001 and 16,000, and 7.33 percent (22) reported incomes between 16,001 and 16,500.



12. Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation serves as a crucial criterion for evaluating any society. Responses from various beneficiaries regarding their occupations, which play a significant role in shaping identity and income, revealed a diverse range of answers (see Table 12). The majority of respondents, 32.67 percent (98), identified agriculture as their occupation, while 35.67 percent (107) reported working in labour. Additionally, 15.66 percent (47) of beneficiaries stated that they were housewives. The prominence of agriculture as the preferred occupation in rural areas suggests that many individuals in Andhra Pradesh possess land for farming. The government has actively promoted various land-related activities across the state, particularly in agriculture, horticulture, pisciculture, and sericulture. Although farming can be challenging on small landholdings, MGNREGA has bolstered agricultural efforts by providing beneficiaries with irrigation

facilities, constructing organic manure pits, and enhancing the land of small, marginal, and Below Poverty Line (BPL) farmers through individual benefit projects. Numerous studies have indicated that supporting agriculture and its allied activities has been a significant achievement of the MGNREGA program in enhancing the sustainability of rural India.

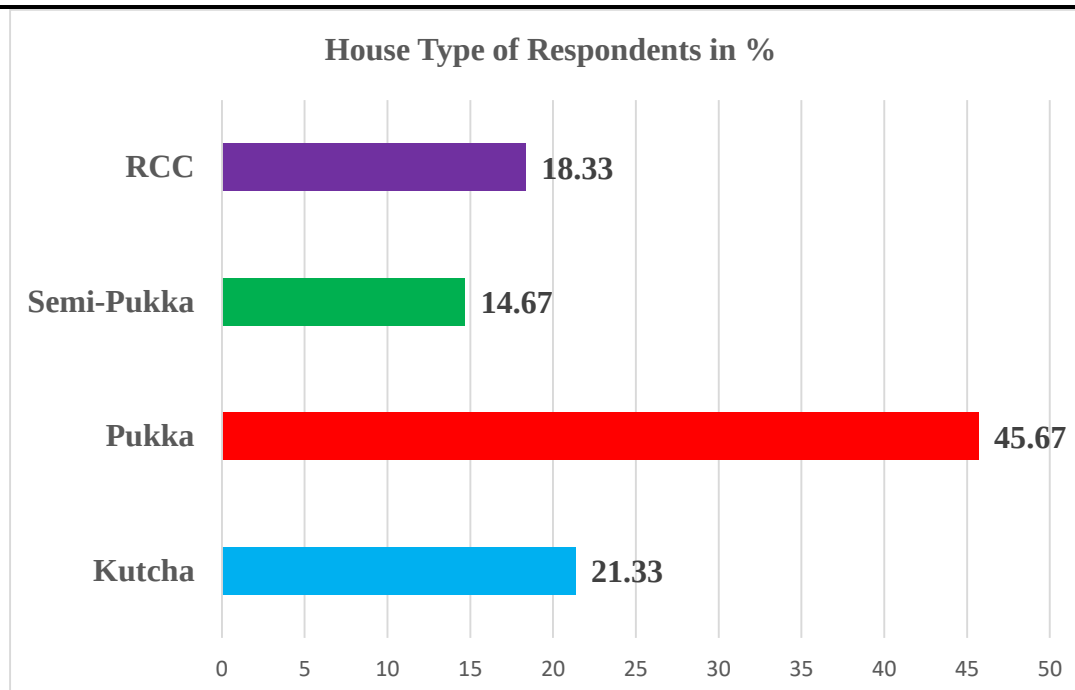


13. Housing Type of Respondents

Housing constitutes a fundamental necessity for both individuals and society as a whole. The status of housing offers insights into the residences of different beneficiaries of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), as illustrated in Table 2.24. Respondents were inquired about the nature of their homes, specifically whether they were classified as pukka (well-constructed) or kutcha (poorly constructed). Those who reported having pukka houses were subsequently asked to specify the type of their structure, indicating whether it was semi-pukka, fully pukka, or of the RCC (Reinforced Concrete Construction) variety, which is characteristic of modern housing in urban areas.

According to the data presented in Table 13, a significant majority of respondents, specifically 45.67 percent (137 individuals), reported residing in pukka houses, which are defined as permanent structures. Among these, a smaller proportion, 18.33 percent (55 houses), were categorized as RCC (reinforced concrete construction), known for their robustness and durability. In contrast, only 21.33 percent (64 houses) were identified as kutcha types, which are less stable. Additionally, 14.67 percent (44 houses) were classified as semi-pukka, indicating that they are of better quality than kutcha houses but do not possess the same level of sturdiness as pukka or RCC houses. Notably, no respondents reported being homeless; many lived in homes constructed through various rural housing initiatives, including RAY (Rajiv Awas Yojna), IAY (Indira Awas Yojna), and AAY (Atal Awas Yojna). The majority of the houses were well-constructed, reflecting the necessity for resilient structures in hilly regions due to unpredictable weather conditions. The findings indicated that over 70 percent of the houses were categorized as solid, sturdy, or durable, referred to locally as pukka or semi-pukka.

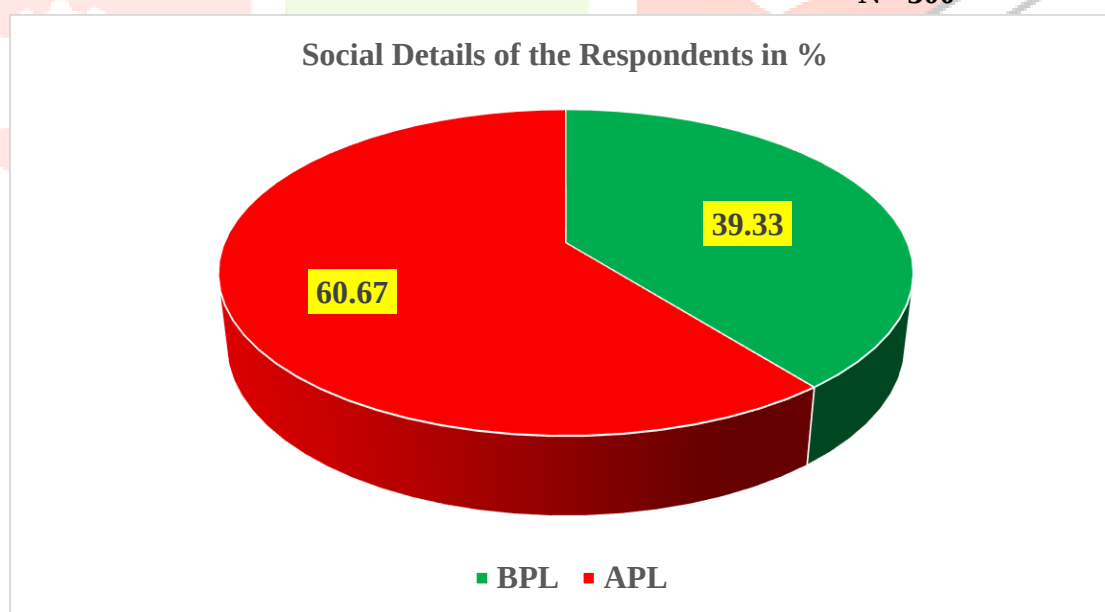
N= 300



14. Social Category of Respondents

Data regarding the social classification of MGNREGA beneficiaries, specifically whether they belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) or Above Poverty Line (APL) categories, was collected from the participants (refer to Table 14). There is a common belief that social security initiatives like MGNREGA are exclusively for those in the BPL category; however, it is, in fact, an inclusive program that allows individuals from any category or caste to participate. The findings indicate that the scheme is also benefiting a significant number of individuals outside the BPL category. Specifically, among the 300 respondents surveyed, 182 individuals, representing 60.67 percent, were classified as APL, while 118 respondents, or 39.33 percent, fell within the BPL category.

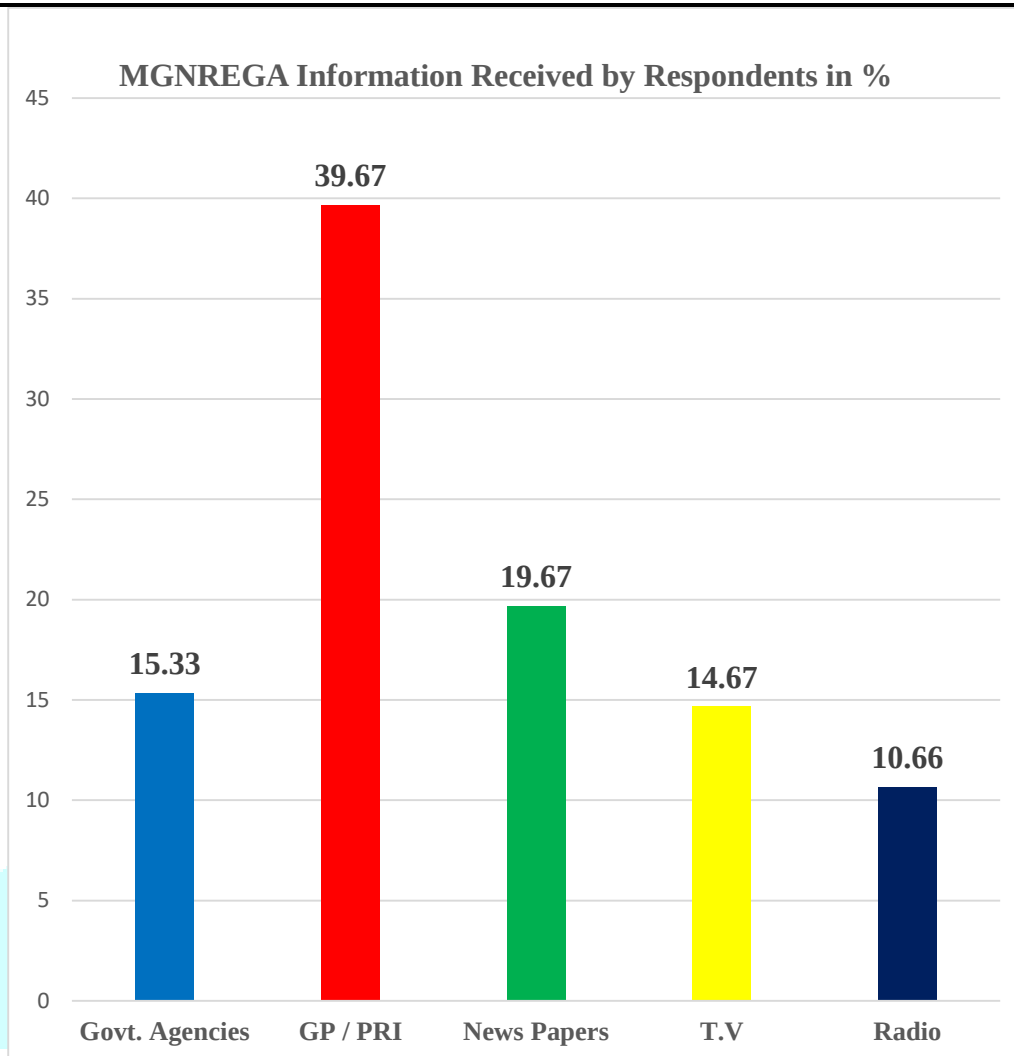
N= 300



15. Mgnrega Information

Understanding how individuals became aware of MGNREGA is crucial. The findings regarding the sources of information about MGNREGA were quite unexpected. A significant portion of the respondents, specifically 39.67 percent (119 individuals), indicated that they learned about MGNREGA through the Gram Panchayat (GP) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI). Additionally, 19.67 percent (59 respondents) cited newspapers as their source, while 14.67 percent (44 individuals) mentioned television, and 10.66 percent (32 respondents) referred to radio.

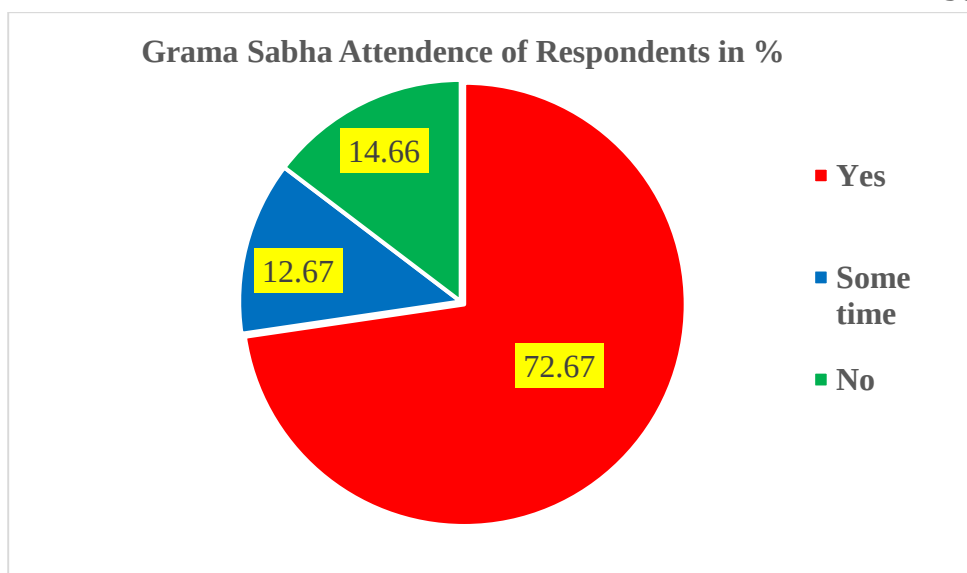
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16. Gram Sabha Attendance

The Gram Sabha (GS), comprising all adult members of the Gram Panchayat (GP), plays a crucial role in the implementation of MGNREGA. It is the governing body responsible for selecting, approving, and endorsing various schemes under MGNREGA, often referred to as the repository of MGNREGA projects. Attendance at the Gram Sabha meetings was notably positive, with 72.67 percent (218) of respondents indicating their participation. This level of attendance reflects the community's trust in the initiatives undertaken by the Gram Panchayats and their developmental efforts. Conversely, approximately 14.66 percent (44) of respondents reported that they did not attend GS meetings, while 12.67 percent (38) indicated that they participated occasionally rather than consistently. MGNREGA has restored the confidence of rural residents in the ability of Gram Panchayats to make meaningful contributions to their development and advancement.

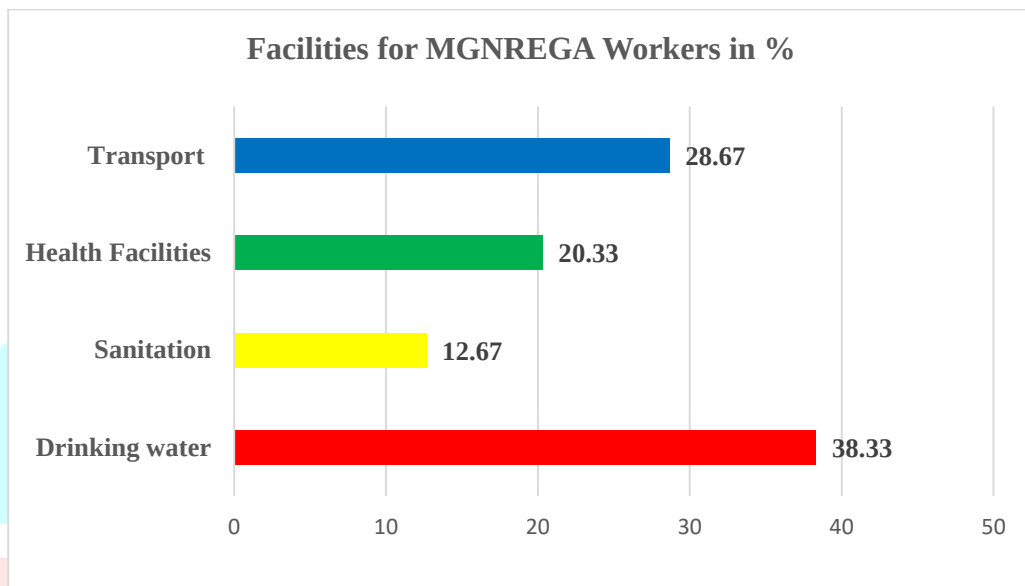
N= 300



17. Worksite Facilities

Certain facilities are mandated by the MGNREGA provisions for beneficiaries at work sites, including access to drinking water, shaded areas for workers, and crèches for children under the age of four. However, interactions with respondents indicated that while drinking water and shade were available, there were no crèche or toilet facilities present at the work sites, according to the information provided by the respondents. Typically, MGNREGA work sites are expected to offer drinking water and sanitation facilities, as noted by 51.00 percent (153) of respondents (refer to Table 17). Among the beneficiaries, 38.33 percent (115) reported the availability of only drinking water, while 12.67 percent (38) mentioned sanitation provisions, 20.33 percent (61) referred to health care, and 28.67 percent (86) indicated access to transportation. Furthermore, it was observed that crèche and toilet facilities were absent at MGNREGA work sites. Regarding toilet facilities, most beneficiaries work close to their homes, thus meeting their sanitation needs. In some instances, it is possible that individuals in these rural areas resort to open defecation and urination to address their natural needs.

N= 300



Conclusion:

MGNREGA is a comprehensive and ambitious initiative focused on rural development and social protection. It represents a landmark piece of legislation, being the first rural development program approved by Parliament. The program aims to enhance livelihood security by guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment per financial year to any rural household whose adult members seek unskilled manual work, without any restrictions or preferences. Initially known as NREGA when it was enacted in 2005, the program was renamed MGNREGA in 2010 in honor of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the country. Kothavalasa Mandal of Vijayanagaram District exhibits a multifaceted socio-economic environment where traditional livelihoods, especially agriculture, remain predominant. However, the area faces ongoing challenges such as limited access to education, healthcare, and economic diversification. This study highlights the necessity of addressing these issues through targeted interventions. While government initiatives like MGNREGA have shown positive results, their effectiveness can be enhanced by tackling infrastructural deficiencies and broadening service access. Strengthening education, upgrading healthcare facilities, and encouraging economic diversification are essential for the community's upliftment. Additionally, empowering women through specific initiatives can foster a more equitable society, contributing to the overall socio-economic advancement of Kothavalasa Mandal. The adoption of modern agricultural techniques, improved educational infrastructure, and better healthcare services will promote long-term sustainability. Moreover, creating varied economic opportunities and supporting local entrepreneurship can mitigate economic vulnerability, making the community more resilient to external challenges. By concentrating on these key areas, the region can realize its potential for growth and prosperity. The goals of MGNREGA include providing livelihood security for the impoverished, offering social protection, uplifting marginalized communities particularly Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women reducing distress migration, promoting decentralized participatory planning, and strengthening grassroots democracy through enhanced local governance. Additionally, it aims to ensure social inclusion and improve transparency and accountability in governance.

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