

The Positive Impact of MGNREGA on Employing Chhattisgarh During Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Most nations around the world are currently dealing with the major issue of unemployment. Similar to a giraffe, unemployment is more difficult to convey than to see. For a very long period, there has been a severe unemployment crisis. Private businesses have sacked staff members. However, it was experienced in the developed world in its most severe form during the Great Depression (1930s), but in the developing world, it was experienced after the Second World War (1945). Despite the expansion of the economy, there has been a slowdown in employment growth in India over the previous few years. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown has also had a severe impact on India's unemployment rate, as most private enterprises have laid off workers as a result. The present study aims to examine the impact of the people of Chhattisgarh during Covid 19 in providing them employment.

Keywords : Unemployment, Covid 19, Chhattisgarh, Employment

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment is the most challenging socio-economic factor in India. The issue cannot be solved with a magic wand that works overnight, only long-term planning can lessen the pressure on the unemployed. In India, unemployment is seen as a barrier to progress, especially for Dr. Mohd. Akhter Ali and M. Kamraju, two illiterate unemployed people. In India, anyone who works an average of 8 hours per day for 273 days each year is regarded as being employed on a regular person-year basis. Therefore, to be considered employed, a person must work for at least 2184 hours a year in meaningful employment. Unemployed people are those who are jobless for a certain amount of time. A country's level of growth greatly influences the size of its employment opportunities, as a result when a nation is developing and its production is rising, employment chances will also rise.

It is well known how the Covid 19 pandemic has crippled governments and the global labour market.

The Covid 19 health catastrophe has developed into a global economic crisis, endangering the lives of millions of people worldwide in terms of their health, employment and money. Most economic growth was significantly slowed by the rigorous containment measures adopted by several countries in the first half of 2020 to flatten the rise in contagion and social events. Since the Great Depression, neither the overall number of hours worked nor participation has decreased as they have recently.

The COVID-19 disease was caused by a new coronavirus that first appeared in late 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan. As it expanded to the majority of the world's countries and territories, it quickly became a pandemic.

The COVID-19 epidemic, one of the worst catastrophes of the past ten years, made the worldwide food insecurity situation much worse. According to predictions made by the UN, 130 million more people would experience severe food insecurity, with the majority living in developing countries. The government's lockdown in India during the initial wave of the epidemic resulted in

economic decline and had what appeared to be long-lasting impacts on the country's nutritional position. The second wave struck with greater force before India had time to recover from the first. India suffers incalculable costs as a result of the pandemic's multiple effects, further preventing the attainment of the development objectives. People in the nation are on the verge of destitution as a result of job and income losses brought on by the economic slump. Food insecurity was made worse by poverty and a prolonged lockdown. The production, storage, and distribution of food are hampered by transportation restrictions, supply chain disruptions, and labour scarcity. As a result, people from all income levels experienced food shortages, rising food costs, and loss of livelihood, pay, and work. The dire consequence of these events, escalated the problem of hunger in India, and its impact much experienced by the vulnerable in the population; the poor, daily wage labourers, and those employed in the unorganized sectors.

The first wave witnessed the discontinuation of the supplementary feeding program and school mid-day meal program that contribute to food and nutrition security among the lower-income groups.

Even as the entire nation was grappling with the economic downturn and rising unemployment amid the nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of covid 19, Chhattisgarh has already been bucking the trend and started showing the green shoots of recovery. Chhattisgarh being an Empowered Action Group (EAG) state is slow in the economic and demographic transition. The geography and demography of Chhattisgarh account for its limited progress reflected in its 14th position out of 17 Indian states as per the hunger index. According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the state has registered the rate of unemployment sliding to a 12-month low of 3.4% in April 2020, which is far below the national rate of 23.5%. The slowing down of joblessness has been recorded over the period since September 2018 when the rate was 22.2%.

Nationwide unemployment was highest in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Bihar at 49.8%, 47.1% and 46.6% respectively. It was lowest in Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Telangana at 2.9%, 3.4% and 6.2%, respectively. During the lockdown industrial activities in the country have been shut and the economic condition of the country has been deeply affected. The nationwide unemployment rate was also increasing. But even in this crisis, Chhattisgarh has been showing positive signs. The unemployment rate of

the state has reduced. The main reason for this is that BupeshBaghel-led government has been working on a large scale to save the rural economy and preserve the livelihood of the villagers during the period of the lockdown being implemented in the country (Thakur, 2020).

Chhattisgarh is currently leading in the country in terms of employing villagers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) as nearly 24% of the labourers employed under the MGNREGA across the country are from Chhattisgarh. The state has employed 18 lakh 51 thousand workers while ensuring physical distancing, wearing masks and other measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus at sites in 9,883-gram panchayats. At the same time, special attention was been given to agriculture and allied activities during the lockdown period. Under the crop insurance and PradhanMantriKisanYojana, an amount of Rs. 900 crore has been transferred to their accounts so far during the lockdown period.

Literature review

Rai *et al.* (2022) stated the positive impact of the MGNREGA scheme on unskilled rural labour during COVID-19. This paper examined that when people or nations were suffering from lockdown, the Indian unskilled labour was doing some constructive work to support their family by generating income by creating ponds and lands. This was only possible because of ONE NATION, ONE NREGA. Thus this paper concluded that MGNREGA is important for maintaining people's faith in life and livelihoods. To adequately address the unexpected humanitarian calamity, MGNREGA must be supplemented with creative governance reforms.

Bagh *et al.* (2022) studied the impact of Covid 19 on income and employment in Chhattisgarh state. It has been observed that farm activities have been proven to generate the most jobs, followed by farm and non-farm activities. Landless households have been found to have more farm work than marginal and small farm households. The study also showed that households without land experienced higher unemployment rates under covid19. Non-farm activities saw a significant overall change in employment proportions.

Tripathy (2021) in his paper stated that the covid 19 pandemic has caused the Indian and global economies to stagnate, all of the systems have failed and there is no longer any clear path for individuals to take. This

pandemic causes a severe employment issue for the Bhil tribe. In this situation, a fresh start is possible without depending on any other country, a self-sufficient system in which every business is dependent on every other one. The Gandhian Gram Swaraj is a far superior option that can shed light on the early stages of an endless trip.

Lokhande and Gundimeda's (2021) study reveals that during this crisis, over 7.5 million seasonal migrant workers sought protection under MGNREGA during the lockdown, found work for about 23 days and were able to obtain roughly 28% of the daily wages they had been receiving before to covid 19. Even while MGNREGA succeeded in providing a safety net for one-third of seasonal migrants who were returning, the two third of them continued to have financial difficulties. Thus the study concluded that these regions' excessive reliance on MGNREGA throughout the current crisis is a sign that severe economic misery has persisted there and must be addressed with interventions and policies that emphasize the development of human capabilities.

Narayanan *et al.* (2020) on their paper examined whether the MGNREGA has served as a credible safety net during the Covid 19 pandemic, especially in regions where it is needed most. Being demand-driven and self-targeting, the programme offers a promising way to employ in poorer areas where a large number of migrants have returned to cities without work. They found that MGNREGA has indeed expanded on an unprecedented scale to cater to the surge in demand for employment. Encouragingly these have happened across districts, including those that have a high share of the poor or high poverty rates and account for a high share of out-migrants. Indeed the role of MGNREGA has prompted calls for similar programmes in urban areas of India as well.

Ali and Kamraju (2020) in his study depicted that any economy that has unemployment faces serious challenges. The jobless suffer from low prospects for finding new employment as a result, and those who are employed feel less sure that they will be able to keep their jobs in the future. The COVID-19 epidemic has had an impact on many people's lives and means of subsistence both in India and abroad. Although the working population and all economic sectors have suffered, individuals who are already at a disadvantage in the job market are more at risk due to things like their status as migrant workers, lower earnings, lower educational accomplishments etc. This study concluded

that both the government and individuals must take action to improve living circumstances and efficiency to promote sustainable economic growth.

Objectives:

1. To understand the impact of Covid 19 for employing the people of Chhattisgarh.
2. To study the role of MGNREGA during the pandemic to improve the livelihood of the rural people of Chhattisgarh.

METHODOLOGY

Even to achieve these goals, secondary data was gathered from numerous government reports included in the budget for 2022, as well as from various ministries like Panchayati raj, farmland farmer's welfare, and the Ministry of Food Processing. Figures and tables have been taken from well-known journals with government submissions or government programs with excellent primary data concerning the financial years. Several pieces of literature and variables, as well as information from newspapers like Business Standard Time of India and DainikBhaskar, have been used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Budget allocation by the Government for the working of MGNREGA during Covid 19:

Table 1 shows the budget allocation for the working of MGNREGA which was sponsored by the Central Government during Covid. In 2020-21 the central government gave Rs. 61500 crore for the working of MGNREGA which then increased to Rs.73000 crore in 2021-22.

Table 1 : Budget allocation for the working of MGNREGA (Rs. in Crore)

Name of the department	B.E	
	2020-21	2021-22
Department of Rural Development	120147.19	131519.08
A. centrally sponsored schemes		
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural	61500.00	73000.00
Employment Guarantee Scheme		

Source: Development, M. O. Budget 2020-21, 2021-22. Government of India.

In Table 2 the number of people registered during Covid times, the number of people who demanded employment, the number of people who were offered

Table 2 :

Years	No. of Registered		Employment Demanded		Employment Offered		Employment Availed	
	Households	Persons	Households	Persons	Households	Persons	Households	Persons
2020-21	4295817	10273837	3453473	7351218	3453317	7350810	3060422	6017874
2021-22	4271876	10270690	3190078	6636820	3189885	6636268	2854135	5506469
Difference	23941	3147	263395	714398	263432	714542	206287	511405

Source: Development, M. O. Budget 2020-21, 2021-22. Government of India

employment and the number of employment availed is given. Through the table, we can understand that in 2020-21 the number of households and people registered was more as compared to 2021-22 i.e. the difference was 23941 in households and 3147 in persons. Similarly, the number of employment demanded in households was 263395 times more in 2020-21 as compared to 2021-22 and in persons it was 714398 times more in 2020-21 as compared to 2021-22. Also, we can see that the number of employment offered in 2020-21 in households was 263432 times more than in 2021-22 and in person it was 714542 times more in 2020-21 as compared to 2021-22. Out of all these figures how much employment was availed to them is very important to analyze, therefore in 2020-21, it was 206287 times more compared to 2021-22 in households and 511405 times more in person. Hence from Table 2, we can calculate that the difference between the employment offered versus the employment availed is 392895 in households and 1332936 in person for the year 2020-21 and 335750 in households and 1129799 in person for the year 2021-22. Thus it is clear from the figure that the Government provided much employment to both the household and the people as was offered the amount availed by them was less in numbers.

Conclusion:

Thus, with the help of this research paper, it can be concluded that MGNREGA has emerged as a shield in providing employment and livelihood to the people during COVID-19. MGNREGA has successfully provided job opportunities to the people when the whole world was thrilled because of the COVID-19 effect. Also, it helped people in improving their livelihood during lockdown when there were not enough resources to fulfil their basic needs. At last, it can be said that MGNREGA has emerged as a boon to the people during the lockdown period.

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