

# A FIELD STUDY ON IMPACT OF MGNREGA ON RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN VILLAGE SAMAYPUR

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## ABSTRACT

This research investigates the impact of the **MGNREGA on rural employment and poverty reduction** with a focused field study in Village Samaypur (n = 12). The objectives were to evaluate employment generation, income stabilization, migration reduction, gender participation, and overall satisfaction. The methodology comprised a structured questionnaire, purposive sampling, and percentage-based analysis supported by visual representations. The findings indicate that the programme stabilizes incomes, reduces distress migration, improves women's participation, and creates useful local assets. Despite operational issues—particularly wage delays—overall satisfaction remains high. Policy suggestions emphasize predictable fund flows, stronger social audits, and convergence with climate-resilient works.

**Keywords:** MGNREGA, Rural Employment, Poverty Reduction, Rural Development

## INTRODUCTION

**The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, enacted in 2005, grants a legal guarantee of wage employment to rural households willing to undertake unskilled manual work. The law emerged from decades of experimentation with public works, including the **Rural Manpower Programme (RMP)**, **National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)**, **Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP)**, and **Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)**. Unlike earlier schemes, **MGNREGA** reframed employment as a right rather than a welfare concession, aligning with the Directive Principles of State Policy.

Past Scenario: Prior to **MGNREGA**, employment in rural India was characterized by acute seasonality and vulnerability to monsoon variability. During lean seasons, households faced income instability and were often compelled to migrate. Public works existed but were intermittent, thinly funded, and lacked enforceable entitlements.

Present Scenario: In its current form, **MGNREGA** functions as a stabilizer of rural livelihoods. By guaranteeing up to 100 days of wage employment, the programme supplements farm income, moderates migration pressures, and widens women's participation through equal wages and proximate worksites. The scheme's emphasis on water conservation, land development, and connectivity yields assets that augment agricultural productivity. Field evidence from Samaypur indicates favourable perceptions about employment days, women's participation, and community assets.

Future Scenario: Looking ahead, the programme's potential lies in deeper digitization (end-to-end MIS, geo-tagging of assets), faster and predictable Direct Benefit Transfers, convergence with agriculture and climate-resilient works,

and targeted skilling for rural youth through **PMKVY** and **NRLM**. Strengthening social audits and grievance redressal will improve accountability while ensuring that the programme remains a dignified pathway from vulnerability to resilience.

### **Recent Policy Developments: Transition from MGNREGA to Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin), 2025**

Since its enactment in 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been one of India’s most significant rights-based social welfare legislations. It guaranteed at least 100 days of wage employment to rural households willing to undertake unskilled manual work, with the broader objectives of poverty reduction, livelihood security, women’s empowerment, and creation of durable rural assets. Over nearly two decades, MGNREGA became the backbone of India’s rural employment policy and played a crucial role during economic shocks such as droughts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

In late 2025, India witnessed a major policy shift with the enactment of a new legislative framework titled the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025. This Act introduced a revised statutory structure for rural employment and livelihood security, effectively replacing the original MGNREGA framework. The transition reflects the government’s attempt to align rural employment policy with the broader national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, which emphasizes infrastructure creation, sustainable livelihoods, and long-term economic resilience.

One of the most important changes under the new Act is the increase in guaranteed employment days from 100 to 125 days per rural household per financial year. This enhancement aims to provide greater income security to rural families and reduce seasonal vulnerability, especially during agricultural off-seasons. The expansion of workdays acknowledges the continuing relevance of wage employment in rural India and recognizes that livelihood insecurity remains a persistent challenge.

Structurally, the new framework seeks to integrate employment generation with planned rural development. Unlike MGNREGA, which primarily functioned as a demand-driven safety net, the new Act emphasizes convergence with village-level development plans and national infrastructure priorities. Employment works are expected to contribute more directly to water conservation, rural connectivity, climate-resilient infrastructure, and livelihood-supporting assets. This marks a shift from short-term employment relief toward a more development-oriented approach.

The Act also proposes enhanced use of digital governance mechanisms, including real-time monitoring, geo-tagging of assets, and improved payment systems. These measures aim to address long-standing issues such as delayed wage payments, leakages, and administrative inefficiencies—concerns that were also highlighted in the field findings of this study in Village Samaypur. However, the effectiveness of these reforms will depend heavily on administrative capacity at the local level.

Despite these proposed improvements, the policy transition has generated considerable debate. Critics argue that replacing MGNREGA risks weakening the original demand-driven “right to work” framework, particularly if employment provision becomes conditional or budget-constrained. There are also concerns regarding shared funding responsibilities between the Centre and states, which may affect implementation in fiscally weaker states. Women’s groups and civil society organizations have further emphasized the need to retain strong gender-inclusive provisions, such as childcare facilities and proximity of worksites, to prevent any decline in women’s participation.

From the perspective of rural employment and poverty reduction, the significance of this policy shift lies not only in increased workdays but also in how effectively the new framework is implemented. If adequately funded and responsibly administered, the new Act has the potential to strengthen livelihood security, enhance asset quality, and improve rural resilience. However, if implementation gaps persist, especially regarding timely payments and accessibility, the intended benefits may not fully reach vulnerable households.

In the context of the present study, this policy transition underscores the continued relevance of employment guarantee schemes in rural India. The field evidence from Village Samaypur demonstrates that wage employment

programmes like MGNREGA play a stabilizing role in household incomes, reduce distress migration, and enhance women's economic participation.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Government of India, MGNREGA Notification (2005):** The official notification operationalized the Act's core provisions—up to 100 days of guaranteed unskilled work per rural household, equal wages for men and women, time-bound wage payment, unemployment allowance where work is not provided, and decentralized planning with social audits. From this, I inferred that **MGNREGA** is a justiciable entitlement with built-in accountability.

B.S. Bhatia (2008), in **Rural Employment and Poverty Alleviation in India**, traces the evolution of rural public works and argues that durable anti-poverty outcomes require both wage assurance and asset creation. From this, I interpreted that **MGNREGA's** design—guaranteed work plus community assets—addresses short-term consumption needs while building productive capacity.

C. Rammanohar Reddy (2013), in the edited volume **India's Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme: The Politics and Economics of Implementation (Orient BlackSwan)**, documents cross-state variation and underscores the centrality of administration and political will. I inferred that governance quality and local capacity determine how legal entitlements translate into benefits.

K.N. Nair (2016), **MGNREGA and Rural Development: Lessons from Kerala**, highlights participatory planning and Panchayat-led execution as catalysts for accountability and asset quality. I interpreted that decentralization and community participation are critical levers for success in diverse settings including Samaypur.

S.K. Pattanaik (2018), **Employment Guarantee and Grassroots Governance**, situates the programme within local power structures and demonstrates how transparency mechanisms—especially social audits—reduce leakages. From this, I understood that robust social oversight sustains credibility and timely delivery.

Alakh N. Sharma (2013), **Employment Guarantee: Issues and Challenges**, analyses fund flow, wage delays, and capacity constraints. I deduced that technological reforms (**DBT, real-time MIS**) and coordination across departments are vital to address wage timeliness—an issue reflected in this study as well.

Rajiv Meeta (2019), **MGNREGA and Rural Development in India (Sage)**, places **MGNREGA** within rural transformation and argues for deeper convergence with agriculture and natural resource management. I interpreted that aligning works with local livelihoods multiplies long-term benefits.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**Objective 1:** To assess the effectiveness of **MGNREGA** in generating wage employment in Village Samaypur.

*Rationale:* Employment generation is the primary channel through which the programme stabilizes rural incomes and smooths consumption during lean seasons.

**Objective 2:** To evaluate the programme's role in reducing poverty through improvements in household income, food security, and access to essential services such as education and healthcare.

*Rationale:* Poverty reduction is the core developmental outcome expected from guaranteed wage employment.

**Objective 3:** To analyze the extent of women's participation and empowerment under **MGNREGA**.

*Rationale:* Equal wages and proximate worksites provide opportunities for women's economic inclusion and strengthen intra-household decision-making.

**Objective 4:** To examine changes in seasonal migration patterns attributable to **MGNREGA**. *Rationale:* Reduced distress migration reflects improved local employment opportunities and social stability.

**Objective 5:** To identify operational challenges—especially wage delays and work availability—and propose implementable policy suggestions grounded in field evidence. *Rationale:* Addressing bottlenecks is essential for sustaining impact and credibility.

## HYPOTHESIS

**Primary Hypothesis (H1):** MGNREGA has a significant positive impact on rural employment and contributes to poverty reduction in Village Samaypur.

*Justification:* Prior literature and preliminary observations indicate that guaranteed work reduces seasonal income volatility and enhances livelihood security.

**Secondary Hypothesis (H2):** Women's participation under MGNREGA is associated with enhanced household-level empowerment and improved decision-making.

*Justification:* Equal wages, local worksites, and group-based works reduce gendered barriers to labour market entry.

**Auxiliary Expectations:** (a) Reduced distress migration during lean agricultural months; (b) Positive perception of community assets (ponds, roads, plantations); (c) High overall satisfaction despite operational constraints.

**Null Hypothesis (H0):** MGNREGA has no significant effect on employment or poverty indicators in the study area.

*Testing orientation:* Although a detailed statistical test is beyond the small sample scope, directional evidence from percentage analysis and consistent respondent feedback provides prima facie support for H1 and H2.

**Theoretical Rationale:** A rights-based public works programme influences welfare through direct wage transfers, local multiplier effects, and asset-mediated productivity gains. Gender-inclusive wage employment further amplifies social outcomes via intra-household bargaining improvements. These mechanisms inform the hypotheses above and guide the empirical analysis in this report.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** A descriptive and analytical design combining primary and secondary data was adopted to capture perceptions and outcomes attributable to MGNREGA

**Study Area:** Village Samaypur (Meerut district) represents a typical agrarian settlement with mixed livelihoods—smallholder farming, casual wage labour, and petty self-employment—making it suitable for a micro-level evaluation.

**Sampling and Respondent Profile:** A purposive random sample of twelve respondents was selected to ensure gender balance and occupational diversity (farmers, labourers, self-employed, unemployed). Ages ranged from late-20s to mid-40s.

**Data Collection Tool:** A structured 20-item questionnaire captured responses on registration under MGNREGA, workdays received, wage timeliness, income changes, migration behaviour, women's participation, and satisfaction.

**Data Processing and Analysis:** Responses were tabulated and analyzed using simple percentages. Visualizations—bar charts, line graphs, pie charts, and a composite multi-bar chart—were constructed to communicate patterns and contrasts.

**Ethical Considerations:** Participation was voluntary, confidentiality was maintained, and informed consent was sought. Data are reported in aggregate to protect privacy.

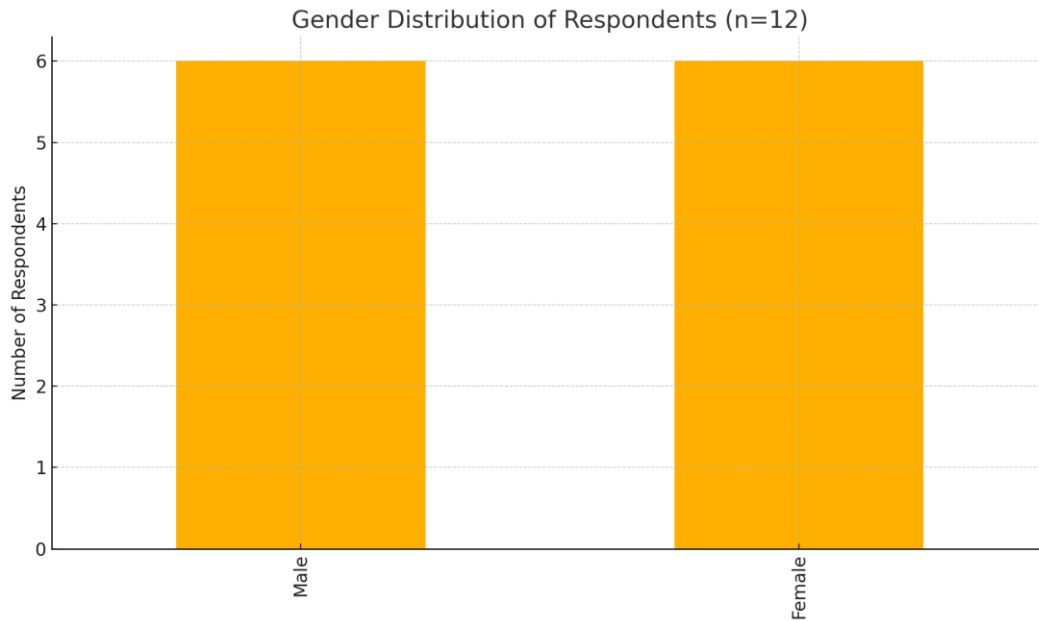
**Limitations:** The small sample size limits external validity; results are indicative for Samaypur and cannot be generalized without caution. Self-reported responses can involve recall bias.

**Reliability and Validity:** Consistency checks were performed across related questions (e.g., workdays and satisfaction). Triangulation with literature strengthened interpretive validity.

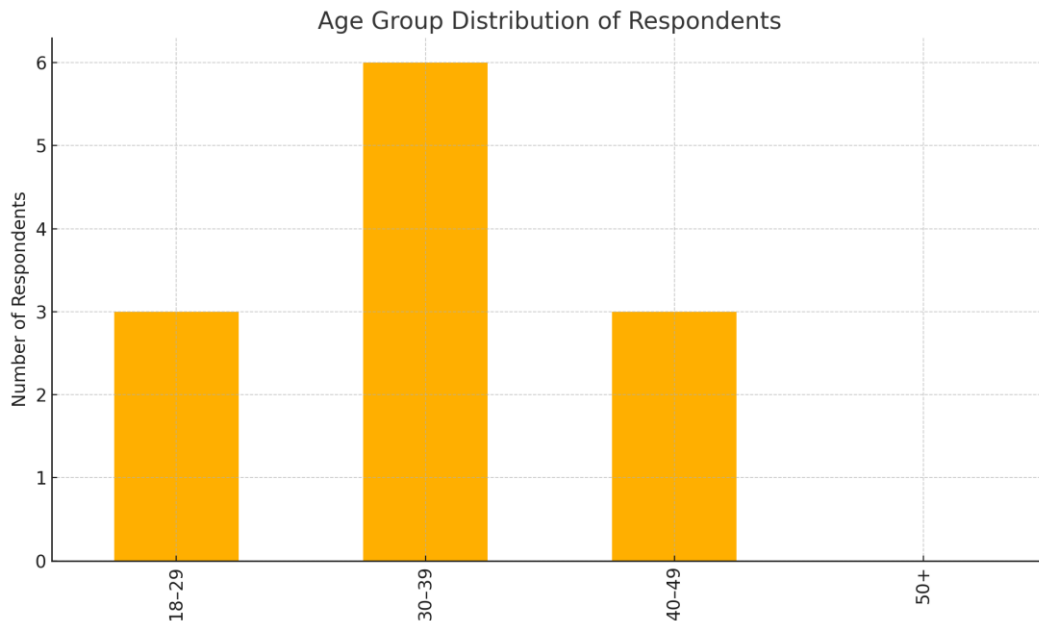
NOTE- This research paper is based on primary data collected by the researcher through field survey and is prepared for academic purposes only.

## DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

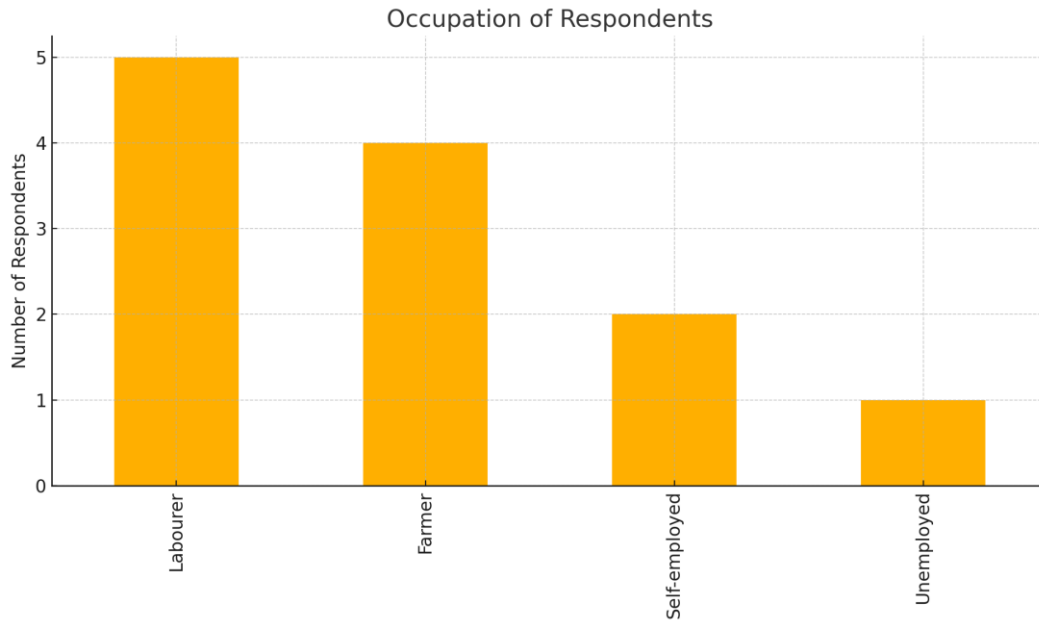
**General Profile of Respondents:** The following charts present the demographic distribution of the sample (n = 12) by gender, age groups, and occupation. These distributions help contextualize response patterns in subsequent analysis.



***Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents. The near-equal gender representation ensures that findings on women’s participation are grounded in adequate female responses.***

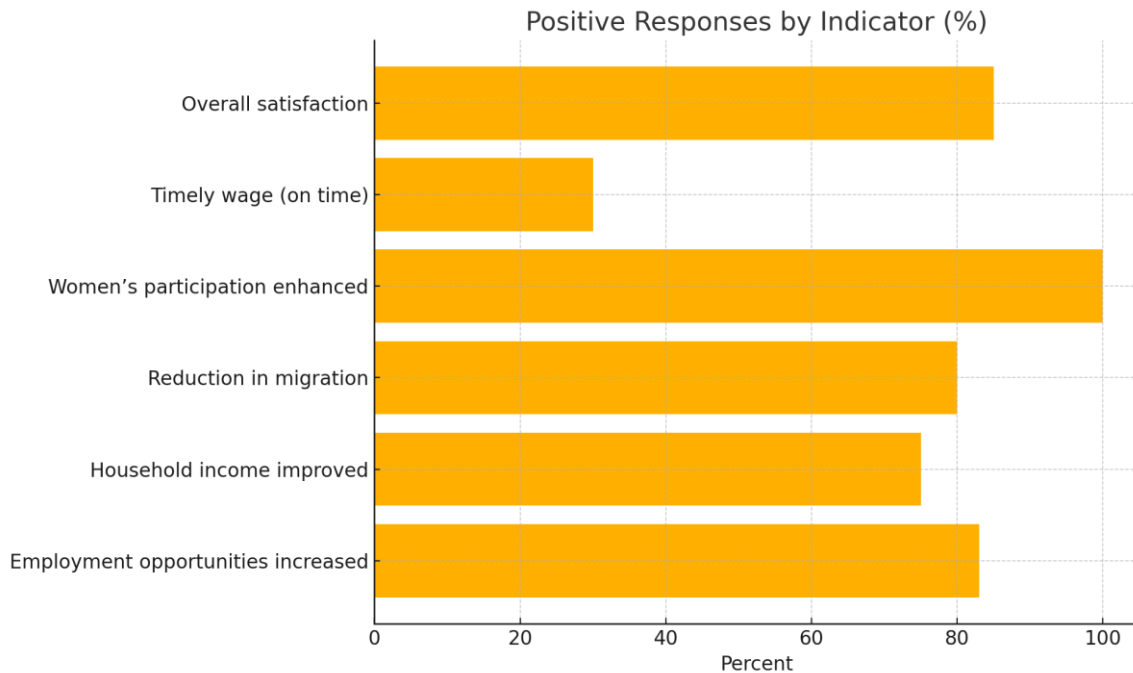


***Figure 2: Age Group Distribution. Most respondents lie in economically active age brackets (18–49), which strengthens the relevance of employment-related findings.***



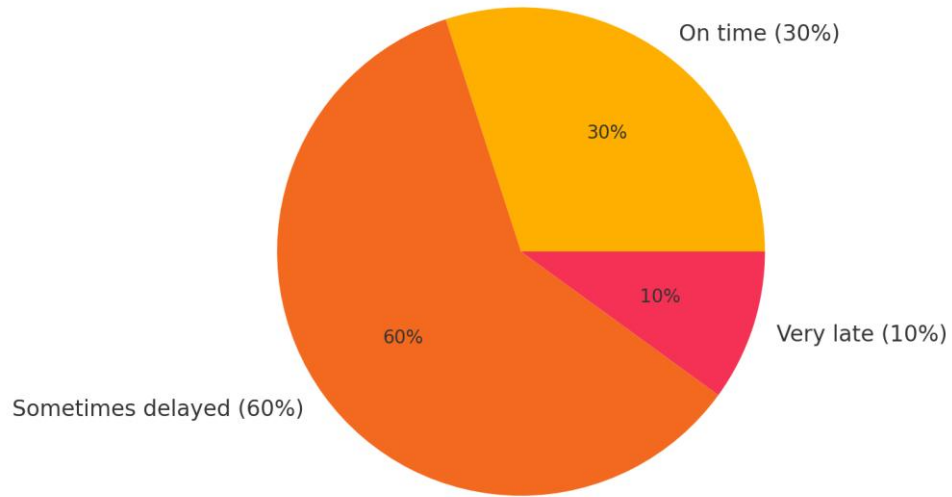
**Figure 3: Occupation of Respondents. A mix of farmers, labourers, and self-employed respondents indicates diverse livelihood bases influenced by MGNREGA**

Programme Impact Indicators: The subsequent visuals summarize positive responses to core indicators—employment, income, migration, gender participation, wage timeliness, and overall satisfaction—and are followed by interpretive commentary.

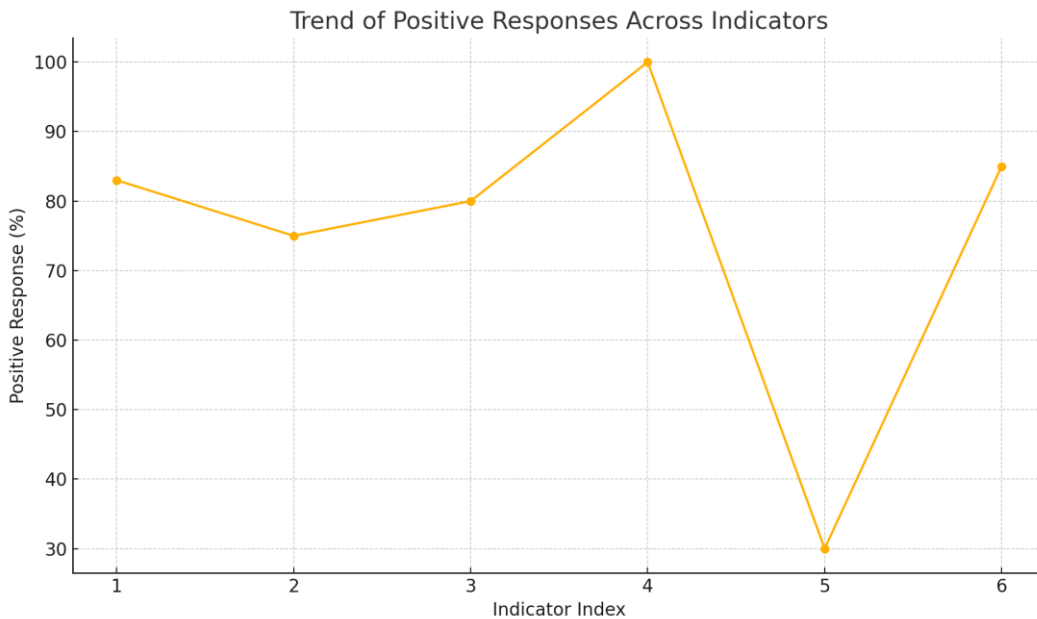


**Figure 4: Positive Responses by Indicator. Strong scores on employment, income, migration reduction, and women's participation are consistent with the programme's objectives.**

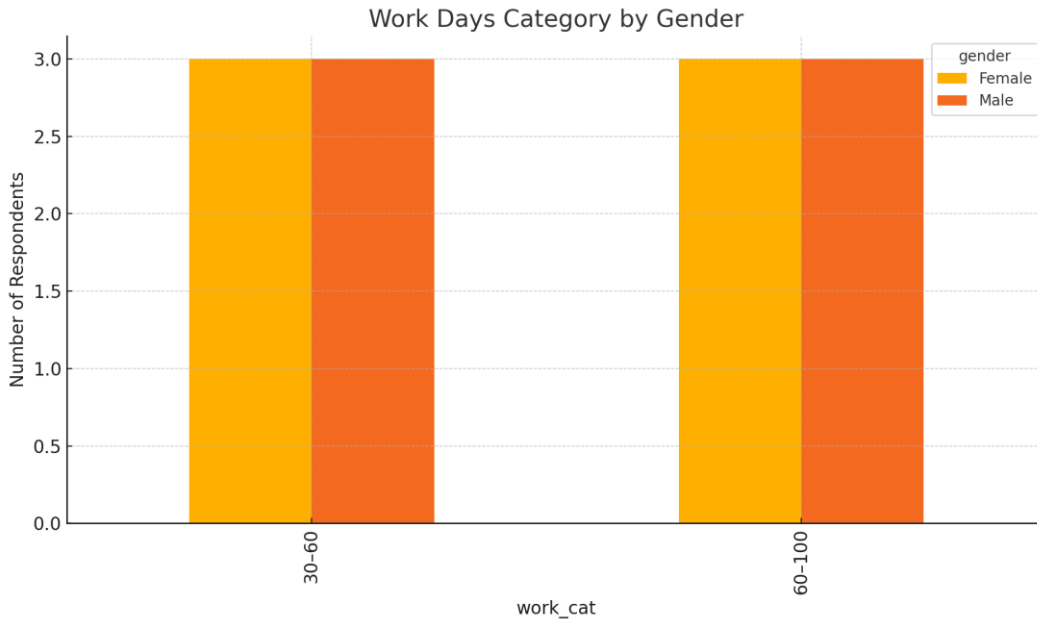
### Wage Payment Timeliness



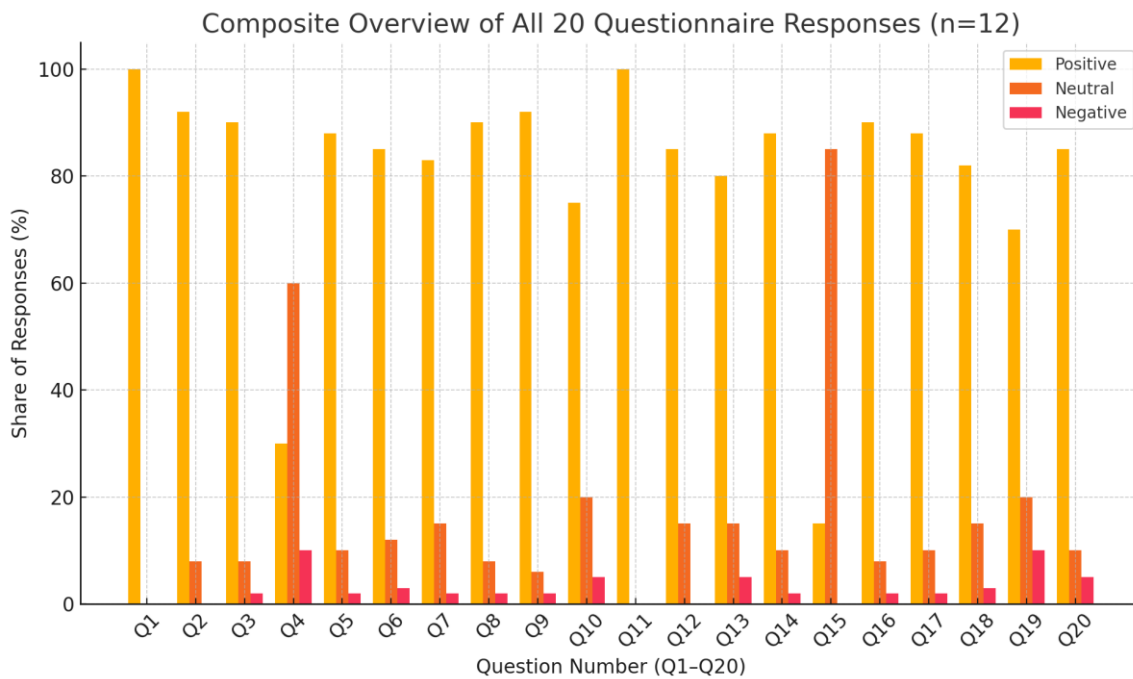
**Figure 5: Wage Payment Timeliness. The predominance of ‘sometimes delayed’ wages indicates an operational issue that merits administrative attention.**



**Figure 6: Trend of Positive Responses Across Indicators. The upward pattern across core indicators, barring wage timeliness, corroborates the positive narrative seen in the field.**



**Figure 7: Work Days Category by Gender. Both men and women are represented across 30–60 and 60–100 day categories, indicating inclusive access to workdays.**



**Figure 8: Composite Overview of All 20 Questionnaire Responses (n = 12). The multi-bar summary shows consistently high positives on registration, employment days, women’s participation, and community benefits; mixed responses on access to services; and relatively weaker scores on wage timeliness and difficulty obtaining work. The distribution supports the study’s primary and secondary hypotheses.**

## MAJOR FINDINGS

**Employment Stabilization:** MGNREGA offered predictable work during lean agricultural months, reducing idle time and stabilizing incomes. Respondents reported using wages for food, education, and healthcare, pointing to improved consumption smoothing.

**Poverty and Basic Needs:** A majority indicated incremental improvements in income and the ability to meet basic needs. While gains were modest, they were reliable and recurrent—especially valuable for households dependent on casual labour.

**Women's Empowerment:** Equal wages and nearby worksites enabled women's entry into paid work. Respondents associated this with savings, small investments, and increased voice in household decisions—aligning with literature on gendered welfare effects.

**Reduced Migration:** Availability of local public works reduced distress migration, keeping families together and minimizing social disruption during off-season months.

**Community Assets and Productivity:** Works prioritized water conservation, rural roads, and plantations—assets that respondents perceived as improving agriculture and daily convenience.

**Operational Constraints:** Delayed wage payments and occasional scarcity of workdays undermined confidence. Despite these constraints, overall satisfaction remained high, suggesting that benefits outweighed shortcomings.

### ★ Current Policy and Debate (2025–2026)

1. **Replacement of MGNREGA with VB-G RAM G Act (2025)** — statutory framework changes: 125 days guarantee, new funding patterns, technology emphasis.
2. **Political and Public Response** — protests and resolutions urging restoration of *MGNREGA*'s name and original intent.
3. **Technology and Monitoring Push** — tech platforms to improve wage payment and transparency.
4. **High Budget Allocations for Rural Employment (2026)** — indicates continued government commitment.
5. **State-Level Implementation Dynamics** — West Bengal's resumption of work and debates over federal vs state roles.
6. **Academic and Civil Concerns** — debates on weakening rights-based guarantees under the new scheme.

### SUGGESTIONS

**Policy-Level Reforms:** Increase guaranteed workdays to 150 per household and align the calendar with agricultural cycles. Provide contingency allocations for drought or flood conditions to avoid employment gaps when rural incomes are most vulnerable.

**Administrative Efficiency:** Enforce time-bound electronic wage transfers with automated SMS alerts to workers. Publish weekly muster rolls and payment registers at Gram Panchayat offices to strengthen transparency and trust.

**Community Participation:** Institutionalize quarterly social audits with active community involvement. Create worker information groups to raise awareness on entitlements, grievance procedures, and safety standards at worksites.

**Convergence and Asset Quality:** Prioritize convergence with agriculture, water harvesting, and afforestation works to create durable, high-quality assets that directly support local livelihoods and climate resilience.

**Skill Development and Mobility:** Introduce short skilling modules (tool handling, nursery management, basic masonry) that complement *MGNREGA* works and open pathways to higher productivity and incomes through *PMKVY* and *NRLM* linkages.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that **MGNREGA** functions as a practical expression of social protection in Samaypur. It delivers wage employment during lean seasons, stabilizes household consumption, and generates community assets that support agriculture and connectivity. The data reveal broad-based positive perceptions on employment, income, migration reduction, and women's participation.

Operational constraints—particularly wage delays—persist and must be addressed through predictable fund flow and streamlined digital payment systems. Strengthening social audits and local planning will enhance accountability and asset quality. With these refinements, the programme can amplify its poverty-reducing impact and deepen resilience against shocks.

At a broader level, **MGNREGA** aligns with national goals of inclusive growth and several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—notably, No Poverty, Gender Equality, and Decent Work. Its future effectiveness will depend on convergence with climate-resilient livelihoods, enhanced skilling for rural youth, and continuous community participation. In sum, **MGNREGA** remains central to India's rural development architecture—linking employment to dignity, and dignity to development.

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