EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH MGNREGA- A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is a process, the chief objective of which is changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. MGNREGA is the first ever Act that provide guarantee wage employment to the rural population particularly women. It has positive impact on employment and employment pattern of women in recent years. The major objective of the Act "Women Employment" is to promote gender equality through wage employment especially for women. This paper focuses on employment of rural women through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act on the 32 – Garm panchayats of kariapatti block of Virdhunagar District and examines (MGNREGA) how women are empowered culturally and economically in the study area.
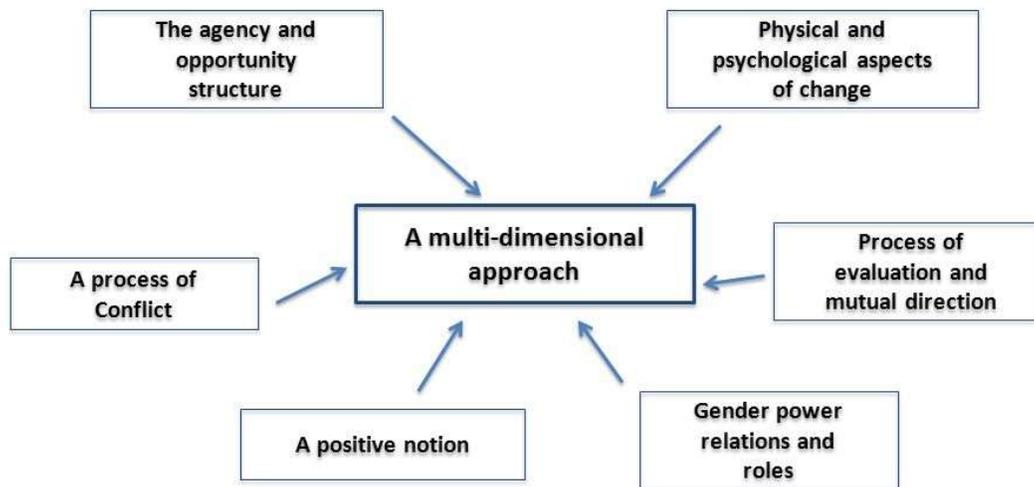
Keywords- Empowerment, Women Participation, Employment Programmes, and Guaranteed wage, MGNREGA.

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)* is an Indian job guarantee scheme, enacted through a legislation on August 25, 2005. which provides legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to one adult member of any rural household willing to do public work espicially unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wages of 100 per day. Various research studies and government reports have focused on the impact of MGNREGA on women perspective, particularly on socio - economic improvements and challenges faced by women. The empowerment of rural women is crucial for the development of the scheme of rural Bharat. The empowerment of women has to be first initiated by women themselves would naturally be followed by the government Empowering women ensures the creating of good nation, When women are Empowered,

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society's stability is assured". The MGNREGA has a positive impact on Empowerment and Employment pattern of Women in the recent years. The Act is potential in empowering women by providing Employment highly appreciable. In this study an attempt is made to analyse the economic and cultural development which would lead to overall women empowerment in MGNREGA programmes and its role in improving the living standard of women. In other words this programme is helpful in improving women's identity in terms of economic status and in participating the social sphere.

Notions of Empowerment

The agency and opportunity structure

Physical and psychological aspects of change

A process of Conflict

A multi-dimensional approach

Process of evaluation and mutual direction

A positive notion

Gender power relations and roles

Active participation of any community in the development the process is recognized as a tool for empowerment. In Indian social set up, the participation of women in the developmental process has to be ensured through tangible measures taken at various levels for their overall development. The government has taken a conscious view to make adequate provisions in its policies and programmes, through which it is to be ensured that the women of the country are not only empowered but also actively participate in the development process in the country. Various programmes of the Ministry of Rural Developmental are introduced and implemented keeping in view the above perspective. The MGNREGA programmes have special components for women. Major schemes, focussing on women's component, include the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), and the implementation of these programmes is monitored specifically with reference to coverage of women.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Women have a predominant role in the family particularly in developing country like India unemployment is a Major challenges of our country. The Government has introduced the scheme MGNREGA that have greater impact in addressing the above issue Even through there

are more number of rural development programme introduced by the Government from time to time to ensure the balanced regional development of rural areas, employment Generation and poverty eradication but still Women are socially, economically and politically backward and they are family many problems in work place. Hence analysing how the women has empowered via Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

is the need of an hour and an attempt has been carried out to study how the state holders really empowered through this scheme in Kariapatti Block of Virudhunagar District.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

    1. To examine the demographic profile of the beneficiaries in the study area.

  2. To assess the factor that empower rural women throug MGNREGA.

    3. To assess the level of empowerment of women is Economical and Cultural spheres

4. ROLE OF MGNREGA IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

       Women's participation in the scheme enables them to come out of their homes not only for work but to also visit panchayat offices and banks, which was not practiced in the earlier days. Which has result in the elevation of the women in the society.

       The women make a debt use of chance, to not only excell in all areas, but also to play a predeterminant role in the development of country on the whole (Tiwari and Upadhyay 2012). Empowerment of women takes the nation strong. (Dr. A.P.J. *"*Abdul Kalam). Lack of access to Employment Opportunities which makes women economically dependent is chief reason behind inequality. This in turn has an adverse impact on women's lower wages and stunts their economic agency and decision making (Soumyendra Datta & Krishna Sing, 2012). Thus one major objective of the MGNREGA scheme is to ensure economic Empowerment of women. There is absence of sample amount of studies on the issues of change in gender roles of the women employed on MGNREGA sites yet researches have noted the increased confidence among women. Women remain confined to the household chores, occupation and in the formulation of social safeguard policy. There is a refusal to accept the dual role of women as care givers and income generation of the family as a collective concern of the state. MGNREGA is considered to be an opportunity for rural poor, particularly the women, to earn a handsome income with dignity (Dreze, 2008).

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

       The study aim at collecting information about empowerment of rural women through MGNREGA, a study confined only to kariapatti block of Virudhnagar District. The focus of the study to know the status of empowerment of rural women through the scheme the finally analysed the actual Empowerment in the particular block only.

6. METHODOLOGY:

       The study is based on primary data and secondary data. Purposive sampling methodwas followed to select the respondents from the Kariapatti blocks of Virudhunagar District. 32 Gram Panchayats from the block were selected on the basis of maximum number of women participation in MGNREGA. The primary data were collected through Personal interview schedule. The secondary date were collected from DRDA,Virudhunagar District.

Sample size:

The data are collected from only one block, namely Kariyapatti, Virudhunagar District, where 350 samples were selected from Samples profile of the study area and are presented below.

Table 4.1

SAMPLE PROFILE	
Characteristics	Number/ Percentages
Limit of analysis	Households
Total Number of workers in kariapattiblock	27204
No.of.villagescoverage	137

Source: Compiled from DRDA, Virudhunagar district for the year 2021-22

Sampling Technique-

Judgmental (purposive) Sampling techniques were used. The study area was thickly populated with the weaker and vulnerable sections of the society which includes SC, ST and others.

Tools Used: Frequence Distribution, SEM model, Factor Analysis, Weighted Average Mean score,Sub- Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA).

The studies were conducted on this topic. The important literature related to the issues are presented below

7.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Darshana Das(2020) Studied the empowerment of rural women under MGNREGA in BarpetaDistrict of Assam,The found thatthe achievement of inclusive growth and overall development is highly dependent on the gender equality and prosperity of women in the rural society. She concluded that theimplementationof MGNREGA in that area has affected the rural life of people and also improved some areas withbenefits for the women.

JhumurSamaddar's (2020) Study about MGNREGA and its Impact on Women Employment, observer that Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been the flagship programme of the Government of India, with the key objective of poverty alleviation, employment generation and rural employment. He concludes that MGNREGA, with the revolutionary ideas of providing guaranteed employment, has been considered to have a ground breaking impact on rural poverty and unemployment for women.

Sonalde Desai (2018) Studied about the Public Works Programmes Increase Women's Economic Empowerment under MGNREGA. Formed that the primary impact of MGNREGA implementation is to increase women's participation in paid work, and thereby to increase their income, though a similar impact is not found for men. This suggests that the demand for labour may be a bigger constraint on women's work participation in India than labour supply. She concluded that the role of women has increased positively in the field of MGNREGA.

VigneswarV,Kirubagaran(2018) Studied on the Economic analysis on the MGNREGA observes, that the MGNREGA provides livelihood security to the resource-poor rural people. The study has also revealed that in an agriculturally-backward area participation in economic activities is more for non beneficiaries than for beneficiaries but in agriculturally-

developed area, situation is just reverse. On an average, MGNREGA is providing employment to the tune of 18.1 per cent of the total employment of the households. The study throws light on the employment differential in the developed and developing areas. In the agriculturally-backward area, the share of MGNREGA jobs in total employment is 24.6 per cent, while it is 13.7 per cent in the developed area.

A. K. Salgotra, P. D. Singh and Ajay Singh Manha's (2018) study on Empowerment Of Women Through Mgnrega: Issues And Challenge,observed that MGNREGA is the first ever law that provides guaranteed of wage employment to the rural highest population with the aim of strengthening the natural resources through works. This paper attempt analyse to the participation level of males and females in MGNREGA and also to trace the obstacles in the path of implementation of this scheme. The sample population was selected through Disproportionate Stratified random sampling method and 360 households extracted from the six blocks of Pauri-Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. The investigator utilized self -prepared questionnaire to collect the primary data from the respondents. The study also revealed that the participation level of females is higher than that of males in MGNREGA. The study pointed on the positing one of the scheme is found the enhanced that decision making power of women.

Empowerment of Women through MGNREGA inNadia District of West BengalBhajan Chandra Barman (2018) to explain the impact of MGNREGA on women empowerment in the study area. The study is based on primary data collected from 200 women of Santipur block in Nadia district, West Bengal during 2017-18. For measuring women empowerment, a Cumulative Empowerment Index (CEI) has been constructed. Three-point scale has been used to calculate each indicator. In this study, possible score value of CEI varied from 0–16where 0 indicates the lowest level and 16indicatesthe highest level of economic empowerment. The analysis shows that the level of women empowerment in the study area was not satisfactory because the majority (95.2%) of the women belonged to low to medium level of economic empowerment and only 5% of them belonged to a high empowerment level. Hence the author concludes though that MGNREGA has impacted women empowerment it is not upto the expected mark.

Shamim Ahmad, Faizan Khan Sherwani, Mohammed Jamshed (2017) Women Empowerment Through MGNREGA: An Empirical Study Of Mewat (Haryana), That Women in Indian society are a totally deprived lot. Their empowerment has a great potential in leading the country to spectacular development. The emerging issues and challenges in rural India also compel us to adopt a pragmatic support system to empower the women. MGNREGA and itsImplementation supports this agenda through facilitating the essential processes of entrepreneurship, capacity building, education, health and hygiene etc. especially by involving the women folk of the rural India. The achievement of inclusive growth and overall development is highly dependent on the gender equality and prosperity of women in the rural society. The study focuses on the impact of MGNREGA in Mewat region on the women population and their different developmental indicators. The result of the analysis encouraging result and identifies significant changes in rural women entrepreneurship through these arrangements.

Gnyaneswar's (2016) study entitled Women Empowerment through MGNREGA

Observed that Empowerment is a process which aims at changing the nature and direction of systematic forces, which marginalize women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context. Gender is the inevitable push factor for growth and development of a nation like India. In order to benefit such of the chronically poor population. In india women beyonded doubt are in the majority economically and socially disadvantages women (MGNREGA) which was enacted in 2005. which plays a significant role in meeting the practical as well as strategic needs of women's participation. It has become a beacon in the empowerment of the rural women and contributed substantially for the better living and economic conditions by offering equal wages to male and female workers.

Dr.Akilesh Chandra Pandey, Vishal soodan, Rahul bahuguna (2016)explore the socio economic impact of MGNREGA on beneficiaries in rudrapryag district Uttarakhand –and found on overall economic and social development with study area.The study was carried out in the disaster affected areas of Rudrapryag with beneficiaries as respondents. They concluded that the MGNREGA has significantly improved their social and economic well being.

Sharma (2015) studied the impact of MGNREGS on the social and economic condition of beneficiaries in Dungarpur district of Rajasthan. Througha field survey was used, and the Dungarpur district was purposively selected for the extensive survey. The total sample size was 200 MGNREGA beneficiaries. The author observed that MGNREGS had become successful in enhancing the income of rural households. The positive outcome of was a sharp fall.

8. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study covers only Kariapatti block of Virudhunagar district. This study is only an attempt to measure the empowerment of the rural women through MGNREGA. which contributed substantially for improving the economic and cultural spheres.

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This study was taken up on a pilot basis in the select block of Virdhunagar District as a Women beneficiaries are more in the stduy area.

Demographic profile –Objective: 1

The Demographic Profile of the beneficiaries is depicted below:

Table 1:

Socio – Economic Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Age of the Respondents		
18 - 30 Years	39	11.1
31 - 45 Years	139	39.7
46 - 60 Years	138	39.4
Above 60 Years	34	9.8
Caste of the Respondents		
General (OC)	7	2.0
BC	159	45.4

MBC	33	9.4
SC	149	42.6
ST	2	0.6
Religion of the Respondents		
Hindu	336	96.0
Muslim	4	1.1
Christian	10	2.9
Educational Qualification of the Respondents		
No Schooling	120	34.3
S.S.L.C	199	56.8
HSC	22	6.3
Graduate/ Others	9	2.6
Card Holding		
Below Poverty Line	161	46.0
Above Poverty Line	189	54.0
Land Holding		
Irrigated	93	26.6
Un Irrigated	120	34.3
No land	138	39.4
House Types		
Kaccha House	140	40.0
Pakka House	210	60.0
Monthly Income of the Respondents		
Up to 1000	91	26.0
1001 – 2000	82	23.4
2001 – 5000	177	50.6
Marital status of the Respondents		
Married	265	75.7
Unmarried	33	9.4
Widows	52	14.9

Source: Field study

It was observed from the table No : 1that39.7 per cent of the workers are in the age group of 31 – 45 years, 39.4 per cent in the age group of 46 – 60 years, 11.1 per cent   in the age group of 18 - 30 years and 9.7 per cent in the age group of above 60 years.

Among the 350 respondents, 45.4 per cent are in the BC Category, 42.6 per cent of in the SC Category, 9.4 per cent MBC Category, 2 per cent general Category and 0.6 per cent in ST Category.

96 per cent of the respondents are Hindus, 2.9 per cent are Christians and 1.5 per cent areMuslims.

56.9 per cent of the workers have studied up to SSLC, 34.3 per cent have No formal education, 6.3 per cent have studied upto HSC and remaining 2.6 per cent have studied other courses like polytechnic,Diplomo and soon.

With respect to card holding of the respondents, 54 per cent respondents are found to be above poverty line and 46 per cent below poverty line

39.4 per cent of the respondents not possess any land, 34.3 per cent possess.un irrigated land and 26.6 per cent possess irrigated land and it is noted that 60 per cent of the respondents live in pakka house while 40 per cent kaccha house.

With respect to monthly income, 50.6 percent of the respondents earn a monthly income between ₹2001 – 5000, 26 percent earn of less than ₹1000 and 23.4 percent between ₹1001 – 2000.

Among the 350 respondents, 75.7 per cent are married, of which 14.9 per cent are widows and 9.4 per cent remainun married.

Table 2: Factor Analysis - Empowerment of Rural Women through MGNREGA

	Component		Com	Grouped as
	1	2		
Poverty eradication	.946		.895	
Rise in income work	.923		.871	
Improvement in socio – economic condition	.948		.899	
Provides basic consumption stability to the poor	.945		.894	
Increases the consumption expenditure & asset accumulation	.925		.858	
Equally of wages	.942		.887	
Enhancement of outreach of credit	.927		.860	
Helps to create team sprit	.939		.882	
Improves the quality of life in rural areas	.908		.826	
Enhances the confidence of rural community	.969		.940	**Economic & Cultural women empowerment**
Helps to develop the positive attitude	.963		.927	
Creation of ethical principles	.981		.962	
Intra – household effects allowing women to access to paid work which enhances decision making roles at home		.956	.913	
Community effects (participation in local governance process has increased)		.951	.905	
Increases the unity among women in field work		.953	.908	
Helps in fighting against violence & discrimination		.935	.874	
Recognised in formal & informal sectors of the society		.934	.872	**Overall empowerment**

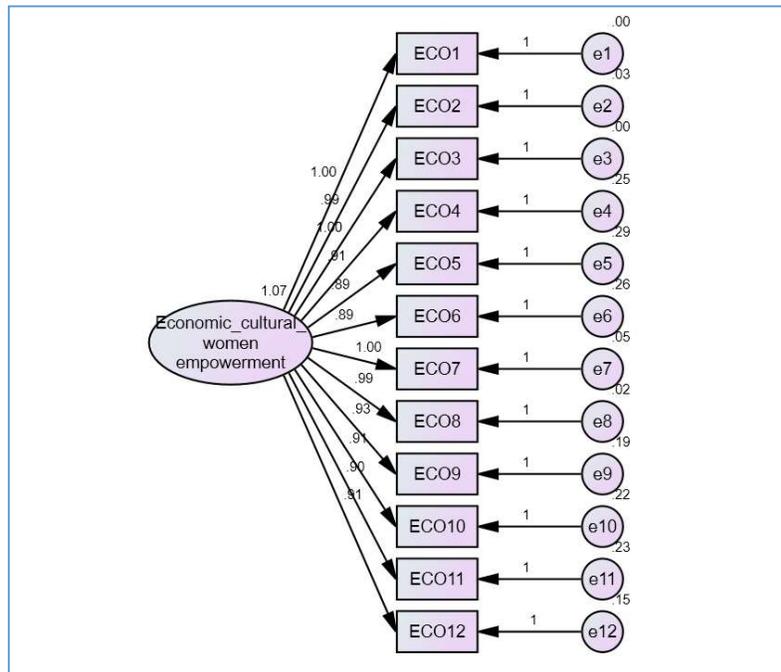|			
Flexibility regarding nature of work for women in the family way		.925	.856
Eliminates / reduces migration of workers		.821	.755
Medical insurance coverage at the work place			.951
higher participation of women workers ensures prioritisation to a greater extent		.975	.916
Eliminates/ mitiqates discrimination and improves equality among the workers.		.921	.917
Enables family members to grow healthier through better nourishment		.957	.922
Eigen value	**16.111**	**2.790**	
Percentage of variance	**70.046**	**12.130**	
Cumulative	**70.041**	**82.176**	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	**.917**		
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.			

Source: Computed data

The KMO statistics of 0.917 significantly higher than the recommended minimum of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974) indicating the sample size was adequate for applying factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of Sphericity was also found to be significant at one percent providing evidence of the presence by relationship between variables to apply factor analysis.

The communalities for each variable was assessed to determine the amount of variance accounted by the variables to be included in the factor rotations and all the variables had values greater than 0.50 signifying that substantial portion of the variance are accounted by the factors.

The eigen values of three factor exceed 1. Hence, researcher has retained these three factors for further study. Total variance explained by the two factors is 82.176 percent. This is a fair percent of variance to be explained and assumes appropriateness of the factor analysis.
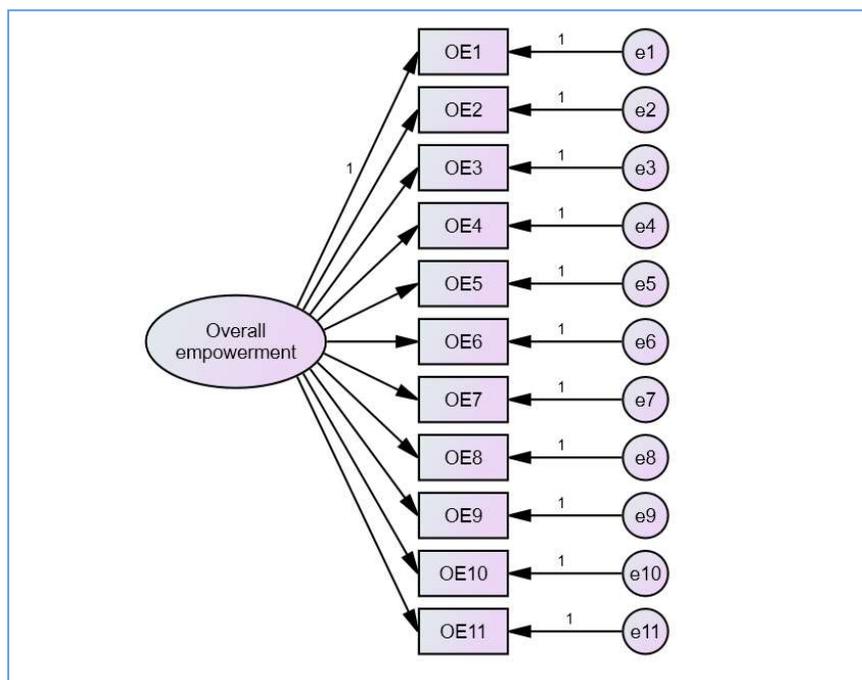
Sub- Confirmatory Factory Analysis (CFA) or measurement model - Empowerment of rural women through MGNREGA

    i.   **Economic & cultural women empowerment**

Chi – Square – 94.892   Df - 54   P – Value – 0.000   RMSEA = .089

The identified variables of economic and cultural women empowerment were found to have adequate goodness-of-fit indices achieved with the threshold suggested by Hair et al. (2006). The model evaluation, estimation criterion employed include CFI = 0.926, TLI = 0.923 and RMSEA = 0.89 with corresponding 95% confidence interval. The chi-square statistics, $\chi2$ = 94.892, df =54, p < 0.000, which is statistically significant at 0.05. It is concluded that the overall assessment of the criteria for model fit was acceptable for the 12 items using second order confirmatory factor analysis in its validation.

ii **Overall empowerment**

Chi – Square – 42.680 Df - 44   **P – Value – 0.000**   **RMSEA = .072**

The identified variables of overall empowerment were found to have adequate goodness-of-fit indices achieved with the threshold suggested by Hair et al. (2006). The model evaluation, estimation criterion employed include CFI = 0.910, TLI = 0.922 and RMSEA = 0.72 with corresponding 95% confidence interval. The chi-square statistics, $\chi 2$ = 42.680, df =14, p < 0.000, which is statistically significant at 0.05. It is concluded that the overall assessment of the criteria for model fit was acceptable for the 11 items using second order confirmatory factor analysis in its validation.

Table 3: Actual Empowerment

S.No.	Actual Empowerment	Mean	Rank
1	Recognition in the society	3.71	VII
2	Specially earmarked for upliftment of women (SC/ST, otherwise enabled)	3.86	VI
3	Supporting women's participation in political activities	3.96	V
4	Respected by family members	3.98	IV
5	Enhancement in the power of decision making.	4.08	II
6	Removal of social, regional & gender gaps through active participation in the community	4.07	III
7	Holistic empowerment of women	4.22	I

Source: Primary data

It is clear from the Table3, that as the respondents are very much satisfied with holistic empowerment of women it is ranked first with a mean score of 4.22 followed by Enhancement in the power of decision makingwith a mean score of 4.08. Removal of social, regional and

gender gaps through active participation in the community ranked third with a mean score of 4.07, following the variable respected by family members which has a mean score of 3.98. Supporting women's participation in political activities is ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.96, Specially earmarked for upliftment of women (SC/ST) is ranked sixth with a mean score of 3.86 and the variable recognition in the society with a mean score of 3.71is at the bottom of the pyramid.

10. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. From the investigation, it is clear that the majority 39.7 percent of the respondents are in the age of 31 – 45 years, 45.4 percent of the respondents belongs Backward class. Almost 96 percent of the respondents are Hindus, With respect to educational qualification more than halfof the respondents have studied up to SSLC while majority of 54 percent of the respondents are above non poverty line, and 39.4 percent of the respondents do not posess any land. Where majority 60 percent of the respondents live in pakka house more than half of the respondents earn a monthly income between ₹2001 – 5000 and three fourth of the respondents are married.

2. The study on the Empowerment of rural women through MGNREGA offers a good understanding of factors that Economic independence contributes much to cultural empowerment and overall empowerment. It is also found the fit indices achieved for eleven items using second order confirmatory factor analysis in its validation.

3. It is also inferred from the study that a majority of the respondents consider Holistic empowerment of women as actual empowerment followed by enhancement in the power of decision making and remoral of social, regional and gendergap through active participation in the community.

11.SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Women are an important part of the society in India they are most powerful working women with secondary citizens MGNREGA open new avenue for theirhope of ray for rural women which provide recognition in the society by including them in the community level work. Even through MGNREGA has emerged as a very powerful tool for women empowerment upon newMGNREGA programmea special provisions has to be teamed for the benefit of widow, women with disabilities and single women which in turn help them to spent wages earned at MGNREGA work on have control over household resources, there by maintain well- being of the family health, education nutrition and soon.

MGNREGA had a positive impact on the socio-economic conditions of the female. It enables the beneficiaries to enhance their attitude, reduces the level of poverty by providing job and contributes to increase in the consumption expenditure. Effective levels of women empowerment, awareness and sustained public initiatives are crucial to ensure that the implementation problems are not only addressed but also resolved, and the objectives are met. Table 3 presents the distribution of sample households on Actual empowerment. It is interesting to note that holistic empowerment in the study area is Ranked first but still quite level of empowerment was seen regarding registration in the society. The scheme has to ensure the women participation in the planning and implementation of MGNREGA and there by strengthen the recognisation in the society.

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