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Research paper



MGNREGS In Rayagada District of Odisha: An Analytical Study of Its Socio-Economic Effects on The Tribal and Rural Communities

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Abstract

In 2005, the Government of India launched the MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) to address chronic issues such as inequalities, unemployment, poverty, and immigration for livelihoods. It provides livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing 100 days of paid work annually to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), women, and other economically disadvantaged groups. Its two primary objectives are to ensure livelihood security and to create durable assets in villages. It has increased rural populations' per capita income and expenditure, and improved their overall socio-economic conditions. It has been acting as the best program for the Viksit Bharat.

Rayagada district in Odisha, India, predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, has significantly benefited from this scheme. It offers valuable opportunities to address the socio-economic challenges faced by the district's people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it acted as a safety net for returning migrant workers. Today, the scheme covers the majority of districts, blocks, and panchayats in India and Odisha; it extends to all 30 districts and all Gram Panchayats. MGNREGS continues to play a vital role in addressing chronic economic issues such as inequality, unemployment, and poverty by creating rural job opportunities.

This paper highlights the importance of MGNREGS in Rayagada district, Odisha, and examines how it has been successfully implemented to achieve its objectives. Findings highlight how MGNREGS not only provides a job guarantee but also strengthens access to formal financial services, thereby improving the socio-economic resilience of rural communities and creating assets for rural people.

Keywords: *Financial Inclusion; Inequalities; Job Guarantee; MGNREGS; Rural Household.*

1. Introduction

The soul of India lives in its villages, said Mahatma Gandhi, and he believed that the accurate picture of India would be reflected only in the villages. To raise rural living standards, the government of India passed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA or MAHATMA GANDHI NREGA) in 2005. This law guaranteed 100-day wages for a fiscal year across the country. Family members and rural households with adult unskilled workers engaged in manual labour fall under this scheme. MAHATMA GANDHI NREGA mainly provides rural job opportunities and solves economic issues such as inequality, unemployment, and poor conditions. The scheme stretches its provisions to four categories: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Women, and members of marginalised society. It aimed at providing direct employment to deserving rural people. (Kaur, Jaspinder & Sharma, Shalini,2020).

It is the world's most extensive job guarantee program, giving all rural households at least 100 days of paid work to bolster their security and economic foundation. It achieves several ends by creating jobs, but it significantly enhances equal opportunity, financial inclusion, and community development of local infrastructure. This program improves financial well-being by increasing household income, reducing dependence, and increasing financial stability. It has a positive impact on social well-being and builds a social connection. It reduces financial stress, increases psychological well-being, and empowers women in decision-making. (Panda, M. M., Padhi, & et.al.,2025). The program encounters several hurdles because the implementation process is bogged down with bureaucratic issues, corruption, and unequal levels of impact across different geographic regions. The program encounters high challenges in the Rayagada tribal blocks and other areas because socioeconomic issues create enhanced demand for program success.

Researchers examine this scheme's effect in the Rayagada district by mapping positive aspects alongside areas that need greater attention to maximise program achievement regarding rural development-related issues. It has two goals, i.e., providing livelihood security to a large population and developing durable assets such as roads, small irrigation projects, and public infrastructures. It is based on the values of

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inclusivity with proper governance. It also provides the best opportunities for Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribes (ST)by providing equal employment opportunities.

2. Mahatma Gandhi NREGS- at a glance

As of April 14, 2025, the Rural Development Ministry, Government of India, states that this program includes 269063 blocks, 741 districts, and 7189 blocks. There are 8.18 job cards with 11.6 active workers out of the 15.04 crore job cards distributed to 25.92 workers. Active SC and ST workers constitute 19.02% and 17.36% of the workforce. Women comprise 59.15% of the workforce; the average number of workdays per home is 6.24%. This program creates 4707.28 crore person days, and the government has spent 1114544.15 crore total amounts with the 100% employment guarantee day programming.

According to the Ministry of Rural Development, in 2025-26, the approved labour budget is 198.86 crore person-days under MGNREGS. This 67.11 per cent amounting to 133.45 crore per person per day is projected to be generated in the year's first half. As of 8 June 2025, the central Government has released ₹24,485 crores, which is 28.47 per cent of MGNREGS's total allocation of ₹86,000 crores for the year. (The Indian Express, 10 June 2025).

It has improved the food security and purchasing power of rural people, bringing stability and reducing distress migration. It notably impacts women's participation in the workforce, enhancing their economic involvement and increasing their key role in household decision-making. To make the beneficiaries of MGNREGS more productive, the Indian government has introduced various schemes for workers' progress. The project is UNNATI, which aims to upgrade the skills of MGNREGS beneficiaries to improve their livelihood and uplift them from partial to full-time employment. Till March 2024, a total of 64176 candidates have been trained under this project. The cluster facilitation project was started in 2020 to provide rural livelihoods and address poverty in 250 blocks across 117 districts. The Barefoot Technician (BFT) was launched in 2015-16 to identify educated persons from local MGNREGS workers, train them on civil engineering concepts on the construction of rural roads, measurement, calculation, preparing maps, sketches, and drawings, survey, and setting out construction works, and help others in documentation. As per section 30, schedule 1 of the MGNREGS Act 2005, there shall be an ombudsperson for each district to receive and solve workers' grievances. Mission AmritSarovar was launched on April 24th,2022, to construct or rejuvenate 75 AmritSarovars in every district to conserve water for future use with the objective "HarKhetkoPani". Since 2023, all the workers of MGNREGS have had their wages paid to them through Aadhar-based payment systems (ABPS). As per section 17 of MGNREGS, the gram sabha should conduct the social audit of the work expenditure. They can monitor and perform the social audit of all the projects under their Gram Panchayat.

The scheme has used various emerging technologies to ensure that benefits reach the intended beneficiaries effectively. It operates through an end-to-end integrated, transaction-based MIS platform, NREGAsoft, which facilitates all major activities. The Ministry adopts Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for wage payments, while National Mobile Monitoring Services (NMMS) are used to capture workers' attendance in real-time. The Area Officer Monitoring Visit Application records field-level official visits online. A GIS-based planning framework has also been integrated using Yuktdhara, a space-technology-enabled planning tool, and SECURE (Software for Estimate Calculation Using Rural Rates for Employment) for preparing technical estimates. There are many apps that have been used, such as GeoNREGS, JALDOOT, JANMANREGA, and the Ombudsperson portal, which have been developed to strengthen monitoring and improve overall implementation efficiency. The scheme further emphasises conducting social audits in all Gram Panchayats at least twice a year to promote transparency and accountability.

3. Review of Literature

Literature review provides a comprehensive previously published articles, and various researchers have done an excellent number of research studies on MGNREGS.

MGNREGS in India is mandated to provide wage employment in rural areas, and it ensures livelihood security for every household. It requires periodic assessment with a definitive objective. This evaluation helps identify operational gaps, measures socio-economic impacts, and informs policy decisions to strengthen the programme architecture. (Misra, Harekrishna, 2010).

It is designed as a demand-driven programme, and since residents desire to work in their own areas, it creates more demand. The work project depends very much on the local members. (Anderson, Siwan et al., 2015).

It provides jobs during the agricultural slack seasons, particularly to needy, poor, and socially marginalised groups. It controls migration from one region to another. It improves household earnings and consumption levels, showing the rural region's overall socio-economic development. (Parida, J.K., 2016).

The MGNREGS was a significant determinant for financial inclusion among the tribal people, as it provided education to the head of household and private-owned land, which increased the household's income. (Sahoo, A. K., Pradhan, B. B., & Sahu, N. C., 2017).

It is an opportunity for revitalising agriculture, restoring ecosystems, and providing a livelihood for the poor and unemployed. It impacts rural labour markets, land use, cropping patterns, and agricultural irrigation. (Reddy, T. Prabhakara & Babu, V. Suresh, 2018).

The significant change in workers' decision-making pertains to various household spheres, such as allocation of resources and decisions about children's education and marriage. Financial independence due to MGNREGA had impacted a majority by improving their well-being and agency aspects and had made a dent in empowering erstwhile marginalised rural womenfolk. (Kaur, Jaspinder & Sharma, Shalini,2020)

The operational structure of the scheme was very close to the state government's functioning style. There was a significant increase in employment and income of the households participating in the scheme. Moreover, families with younger and less educated members will likely participate more in the scheme. A household with people with no regular employment benefited most from the scheme, which was very much in tune with the scheme's goals. (Bose, Pritan & et.al., 2020)

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the only wage employment programme implemented for a long time to guarantee employment to the rural poor in India. (Turangi, Satyanarayana, 2021).

The beneficiaries knew that the MGNREGS was to provide work to poor or scheduled households. The maximum no of beneficiaries who have considered the asset created under this scheme is highly helpful to them. The beneficiaries are getting verbal communication, paying no charge for job card preparation. It increases the beneficiary's food and non-food expenses after joining this scheme. Thus, it had facilitated the improvement of their socio-economic status. (Kour, Navdeep & et.al., 2022)

It is a programme that provides employment and creates the infrastructure in rural India, directly and indirectly boosting the country's rural economy. It helps to solve the various economic challenges like drought, micro irrigation, and land development with the increase in agricultural production. (Husain, Tahawwar etal., 2025).

4. Objectives

With a focus on improving the socio-economic status of the area's primarily tribal inhabitants, this study attempts to critically examine the impact of the MGNREGS at the district level. The objectives are:

1) To investigate the effectiveness of financial inclusion of the rural people of India
2) To investigate how this scheme benefits rural family to enhance their livelihood.
3) To investigate how the MGNREGS benefits the people of the Rayagada district of Odisha

5. Rayagada-Its Socio-Economic Background

Rayagada district in Odisha, predominantly inhabited by tribal communities, presents a unique context for studying the MGNREGA. This region faces many challenges in socio-economic problems, including poverty, weak infrastructure, and dependence on subsistence agriculture. Assessing the functioning of MGNREGA in such conditions offers valuable insights that may guide its practical implementation in other disadvantaged regions. It came into existence on 2nd October, 1992.

As per DRDA profiles, Rayagada district covers an area of 7584.70 sq. km. and it includes 2812.33 sq. km. a forest area, and 184014.00 hectares are cultivable area. It comprises two subdivisions, 11 blocks, 11 tehsils, 1 NAC, 2 municipalities, and 182 gram panchayats. As per the 2011 census, the total population was 967911, males were 471960, and females were 49591. The total Schedule Caste was 139514, and the Schedule Tribe was 54995. BPL families, as per the 1997 survey, were 135785. The literacy rate was 43.50%, the sex ratio was 1048 females for 1000 males, the population density was 137, the rural household was 165257, and the urban household was 25124.

The population includes Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), many of whom face severe financial vulnerabilities. MGNREGA has emerged as a ray of hope for these marginalised groups, offering opportunities for wage employment and livelihood security. The following table shows the 11 blocks, their panchayats, and their corresponding population as 2011 census.

Table. 1: List of Blocks, Number of Panchayats and Villages in the Rayagada District

Sl No.	Block	No. of Panchayats	No. of Villages	Total population
1	Bissamcuttck	21	271	84091
2	Chandrapur	8	177	41129
3	Gudari	9	190	42737
4	Gunupur	19	125	76333
5	Kalyansingpur	14	245	59093
6	Kasipur	24	373	140633
7	Kolnara	17	192	73839
8	Muniguda	17	346	85218
9	Padmapur	13	113	56459
10	Ramanaguda	12	111	52632
11	Rayagada	28	269	108781
	Total	182	2412	820945

Source: https://nregastrep.nic.in.

The above table 1 shows that the Rayagada district has 11 blocks. In Bissamcuttck block consist of 21 Panchayats, 271 villages and a population of 84091, Chandrapur block comprised of 8 blocks,177 villages and 41129 population, Gudari block have 9 panchayats, 190 villages and 42737 population, Gunupur block have 19 panchayats 125 villages and 76333 populations, Kalyansingpur block have 14 panchayats, 245 villages with 59093 populations, Kasipur have 24 panchayats, 373 villages with 140633 population, Kolnara block have 17 panchayats,192 villages and its population is 73839, Muniguda block have 17 Panchayats, 346 villages, and 85218 populations, Padmapur block have 13 panchayats 113 villages and 56459 population, Ramanaguda block have 12 panchayats, 111 villages and 52632 and Rayagada block have 28 panchayats and 269 villages with 108781. In total, Rayagada district consists of 11 blocks and 182 panchayats, 2412 villages, and a total population of 820945

6. MGNREGS: India, Odisha, and Rayagada

2006-07, MGNREGS was launched in 200 of the most backward districts, expanded to 130 more districts in 2007-08, and expanded all over India in 2008-09. The scheme saw very high demand during 2020-21, with a record of 7.55 crore rural families accessing work. During COVID-19, it acts as a safety net for migrant workers who were returned to their villages during lockdown. Since then, the number of families employed steadily declined. 7.25 crore in 2021-22, 6.18 crore in 2022-23, 5.99 crore in 2023-24, and 5.79 crore in 2024-25. It does not include the beneficiaries from West Bengal, because of the suspension since March 2022 (The Indian Express, 10th June, 2025).

As per the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, 741 districts, 7197 blocks, and 269135 Gram Panchayats have been covered under this scheme. The total number of job cards issued is 15.33 crores, the total number of workers is 26.39 crores, 8.41 crores of workers have active job cards, and 11.98 crores of active workers are working under this scheme. 198.86 crore have been sanctioned under these schemes for various purposes.

As per the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, Odisha has 30 districts, 314 blocks, and 6794 GPs (Gram Panchayat). As of 17th June, 2025, the total number of job cards issued is 66.3 lakhs to the 108.9 lakh workers. The total number of active cards is 42.9 lakh; the active worker is 64.99 lakh. Out of these, Schedule Caste workers total 30.42 lakh, and Schedule Tribe workers total 15.01 lakh. The approved budget for the worker is 1200 lakh in 2025-26, and 1500 lakh in 2024-25. Person days of Central Liability are 311.12. ST workers' person day is 35.16, and SC workers' person day is 13.42. The average days of employment provided per household is 25.8, and the average wage rate per day per person is 264.76. The total household work is 12.06 lakh, the number of individuals who work is 16.9, and the number of differently abled persons who work is 5620.

Relating to works, the total number of Gram panchayats with Nil experience is 63, the total number of works taken up is 7.62 lakhs, including new and spill over, the number of ongoing works is 6.8 lakh, and the number of completed works is 81848. 34.97% of the amount spent on agriculture or its allied works, 67.44 % on the MWC block, and 54.65 % in the B category works. The MGNREGS brings more prosperity to the finances of the Odisha people. The Central Government released 123264.98 lakh to the Odisha government; the government spent 68.78% of this fund. 84,764.61 lakhs have been paid as wages to the workers.

The MGNREGS programs act as the best creator of assets for the nation, having created various types of assets for rural people. It includes Anganwadi Kendra, Bharat Nirman Rajeev Gandhi Sewa Kendra, Drought Proofing, fisheries, flood control and protection, land development, micro irrigation, renovation of old water bodies, rural connectivity, rural sanitation, Bharat Nirman Sewa Kendra, water conservation, harvesting, and many more. The Rayagada district has successfully created a total of 11,214 assets in 14 categories across 11 blocks during 2024-25.

7. Research Gap

Several studies have been conducted by researchers and government agencies on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) at both national and state levels. However, there remains a gap in localised research focusing on the Rayagada district of Odisha, a backward region known for its predominantly tribal population and socio-economic vulnerabilities. This study minimises the gap by evaluating MGNREGS and shows how it supports the rural poor and tribal workers in the Rayagada district. The study aims to generate context-specific insights that can improve the programme effectively.

8. Data Description and Methodology

This study used a quantitative research approach by employing direct interviews with a list of questions and statistical analyses to achieve its objective with a convenience random sampling method. To explore it in more detail, the study collects the primary data from the rural workers of 11 blocks of the Rayagada district. To explore the empirical impact of MGNREGS, the researchers conducted a field visit across all eleven blocks of Rayagada district. He collected the primary data from the beneficiaries directly through personal interviews. From each block, ten registered beneficiaries have been selected. The interview had been designed to gather comprehensive information on various aspects of the scheme, including financial inclusion, livelihood, social security, and the challenges and limitations workers face. It also shows how this scheme is a game-changer for their economically backward district, like Rayagada.

9. Results and Discussions

The following tables show the results of the Implementation of MGNREGS in the Rayagada district of Odisha.

Table 2: Registered Population in MGNREGS in Rayagada District

Registered population in MGNREGS in Rayagada district as on 25th Nov, 2025											
			Total	SC		ST		Others		Male	Female
Sl. No	Block	HE Registered	Total persons	HE Registered	Total persons	HE Registered	Total persons	HE Registered	Total persons		
1	Bissam Cuttack	32766	83500	6664	16662	18288	48355	7814	18483	40324	43176
2	Chandrapur	28315	45824	3815	6134	19796	31719	4704	7971	23623	22201
3	Gudari	20397	47836	2737	6572	12337	28188	5323	13076	24308	23528
4	Gunupur	31214	82521	1324	3435	24472	64470	5418	14616	41663	40858
5	Kalyansingpur	40669	93474	8504	18505	24289	56613	7886	18356	46272	47202
6	Kasipur	87090	221893	19407	46590	50297	133548	17386	41755	116248	105645
7	Kolnara	22063	65271	2234	6167	15787	47500	4042	11604	30637	34634
8	Muniguda	32807	77015	8275	19505	10299	24534	14233	32976	38373	38642
9	Padmapur	26706	69574	3310	8812	14104	36280	9292	24482	36573	33001
10	Ramanaguda	22393	60628	2650	7582	14602	39576	5141	13470	31027	29601
11	Rayagada	36388	97415	4805	12659	25313	69740	6270	15016	45969	45969
	Total	380808	944951	63725	152623	229584	580523	87509	211805	475017	464457

Table 2 presents the registered households and persons across the eleven blocks of Rayagada district under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), based on data from the official website of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India (https://nrega.dord.gov.in/). As of November 25, 2025, the district had recorded 944,951 registered persons and 380,808 registered households. Among the total registered individuals, Scheduled Tribes (ST) constituted 580,523 persons (61.43%), followed by Scheduled Castes (SC) with 152,623 persons (16.15%), while other categories accounted for 211,805 persons (22.41%). In gender composition, 475,017 were male, and 464,457 were female, resulting in a male–female ratio of 1.023, indicating a nearly balanced gender distribution. Block-wise analysis shows a significant variation. Kashipur block recorded the highest number of registered persons (221,893), contributing 23.5% of the district's total MGNREGS population, while Chandrapur block reported the lowest with 45,824 registered individuals. The blocks of Gunupur, Kalyansingpur, Kashipur, Kolnara, Rayagada, and Bissam Cuttack are predominantly ST-majority, with each having a tribal population of more than 60% registered under the MGNREGS. Meanwhile, Kashipur and Kalyansingpur also show significant SC representation. Gender distribution across blocks is not uniform. Kalyansingpur and Muniguda have a higher number of female registrations compared to males, whereas Kashipur, Padmapur, and Kolnara report a male-dominated registration pattern. In terms of household registration, in household registration, Kashipur (87,090) ranks the highest, followed by Kalyansingpur (40,669) and Gunupur (31,214), while Kolnara (22,063) has the lowest number. Overall, Kashipur emerges as the largest and most MGNREGS-dependent block in Rayagada district, reflecting both its population size and higher reliance on rural employment opportunities.

Here is the Chi-square test of independence between Block and Gender (Male/Female) using the MGNREGS registration data provided. Tested Hypothesis: Null Hypothesis (H_0): Gender distribution (Male vs Female) is the same across all blocks, and Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Gender distribution differs across blocks. Its Chi-square (χ^2) is 1022.09, Degrees of freedom (df) 10, and p-value 3.26x. χ^2 value is extremely high, and Degrees of freedom = 10, hence we reject this null hypothesis. It shows that there is a highly significant difference in the gender distribution across the blocks of the Rayagada district under MGNREGS.

Table 3: Block-Wise Employment Under MGNREGS in Rayagada District

Total attendance, Block-wise					
Sl. No	Block	HE	% HE	PDG	% PDG
1	Bissam Cuttack	3761	13.36769	115092	18.78421
2	Chandrapur	1203	4.275813	17327	2.827947
3	Gudari	2141	7.609739	53610	8.74971
4	Gunupur	2909	10.33943	73431	11.9847
5	Kalyansingpur	3262	11.5941	54700	8.92761
6	Kasipur	1813	6.443931	28820	4.703724
7	Kolnara	1655	5.882353	33566	5.478321
8	Muniguda	2987	10.61667	59272	9.673808
9	Padmapur	1891	5.492941	34426	5.618682
10	Ramanaguda	2374	8.437889	39285	6.411721
11	Rayagada	4139	14.71121	103177	16.83956
	Total	28135		612706	
Descriptive Statistical Results					
	Mean	2,512.27		55,700.55	
	Median	2,374		53,610	
	Std. Dev.	≈ 947.2		≈ 28,693.8	
	Minimum	1,203 (Chandrapur)		17,327 (Chandrapur)	
	Maximum	4,139 (Rayagada)		115,092 (Bissam Cuttack)	
	Correlation coefficient	0.9209			

HE: Household employed PDG: Person-day generated.

The above Table 3 presents the total attendance across all eleven blocks of the Rayagada district under MGNREGS. As per the website, 28135 households have been employed, generating 612706 PDG (person-day generated). It shows that the Rayagada block has the highest share with 4139 (14.71%) households employed, contributing 103177 (16%) person days. Chandrapur block has the lowest participation; it was only 1203 (14.71%), contributing 17327 (2.82%) person days. It shows a greater variation in household participation and work generation amounts within the district.

The analysis of MGNREGS data for the 11 blocks of Rayagada district shows that the mean number of households employed is 2,512.27, with a median of 2,374 and a standard deviation of 947.2. Similarly, the mean number of person-days generated is 55,700.55, with a median of 53,610 and a standard deviation of 28,693.8. The correlation coefficient is 0.9209, which indicates a very strong positive correlation between HE and PDG attendance.

Among the blocks, Chandrapur records the lowest number of households employed, while Rayagada and Bissam Cuttack blocks record the highest number of households employed under the MGNREGS scheme.

Table 4: Highest and Lowest Performing Panchayats of Rayagada District (As Per Households Employed and Person-Days Generated)

Total attendance in Panchayats					
Sl. No	Block	Highest HE Panchayat	Lowest HE Panchayat	Highest PDG Panchayat	Lowest PDG Panchayat
1	Bissam Cuttack	Kurli(579)	Bissam Cuttack (23)	Kurli (26374)	Rasikola (700)
2	Chandrapur	Hanumantapur(255)	Turiguda (39)	Hanumantapur(3624)	Turiguda (726)
3	Gudari	Siriguda (398)	M.K.Rai (70)	Kodama (10282)	M.K.Rai (1804)
4	Gunupur	Tolana(425)	Morama (41)	Tolana (12419)	Dombasara (658)
5	Kalyansingpur	Singari (346)	Parasali (74)	Seriguma (13200)	Pujariguda (1130)
6	Kasipur	Adajore(263)	Chandragiri(5)	Sinduraghati (3541)	Tikiri (128)
7	Kolnara	Gadiseskhal(225)	Kartikaguda (28)	Gadiseskhal(4781)	Keliguda (598)
8	Muniguda	Patraguda (397)	Amalabhatta(48)	Patraguda (9349)	Amalabhatta (681)
9	Padmapur	Likitipadar (349)	Padamapur (38)	Likitipadar (5994)	Khamapadar (872)
10	Ramanaguda	Gogupadu (362)	Boothing (100)	Parikhiti(6820)	Boothing (1573)
11	Rayagada	Gumma (667)	Chandili (2)	Kumbhikota (18701)	Chandili (30)

Table No.4 explains the highest and lowest HE (household employed) and PDG (person-day generated) in the Rayagada district. The following blocks, i.e., Kurli, Hanumantapur, Siriguda, Tolana, Singari, Adajore, Gadiseskhal, Patraguda, Likitipadar, Gogupadu, and Gumma panchayat, have the highest number of households employed in their respective blocks. Bissam Cuttack, Turiguda, M.K. Rai, Morama, Parasali, Chandragiri, Kartikaguda, Amalabhatta, Padamapur, Boothing, and Chandili have the lowest enrolled households employed in their respective block.

Kurli, Hanumantpur, Kodama, Tolana, Seriguma, Sinduaraghati, Gadiseskhal, Patraguda, Likitipadar, Parikhiti, and Kumbhikota have the highest PDG in their respective blocks. Rasikola, Turiguda, M.K. Rai, Dombasara, Pujariguda, Tikiri, Keliguda, Amalabhatta, Khamapadar, Boothing, and Chandili have the lowest PDG in their respective block of the Rayagada district.

Table 5: Demographic Profiles (Total Respondent:110)

Demographic Details		No of participants	Percentage
Gender	Male	64	58.18
	Female	46	41.82
Age	20-30	18	16.36
	30-40	42	38.18
	40-50	25	22.73
	50-60	25	22.73
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	58	52.73

	Up to 10th pass	25	22.73
	Up to 12th pass	15	13.64
	Degree	12	10.91
The income of the family per year	10000-30000	17	15.45
	30000-50000	61	55.45
	50000-100000	32	29.09
Caste	SC	49	44.54
	ST	45	41
	Others	16	14.54

Table 5 data exhibits demographic details of the Rayagada district. It provides information about various paramount demographic factors, i.e., literacy, income, caste, age, and gender, directly impacting economic well-being. About gender, Rayagada district is overwhelmingly male, with males being 58.18%, and females being 41.82%. A larger proportion of the working age group is 30–50 years, i.e., 60.91%, indicating that most labourers are young and productive. More than 52.73% are illiterate, which signifies that the people are educationally backwards; it affects employability and economic growth. In income, 55.45% people are in the very low income group between ₹30k–₹50k annually. It indicates that people still live in poverty and have a less-than-ideal livelihood. In caste, 44.54% people are in SC (Schedule Caste) 41% are in ST (Schedule Tribe), and the remaining belong to other categories.

The demographic profile suggests that while Rayagada has a young and productive workforce, high illiteracy, widespread poverty, and social disadvantages among SC/ST communities pose significant challenges to its economic development. It shows that more beneficiaries belong to tribal people.

Table 6: MGNREGS Beneficiaries Profiles

Beneficiaries details		No of participants	Percentage
Job Card availability	Available	95	86.36
	Not Available	15	13.63
Job allocation	100%	85	77.27
	50-100 %	10	9.09
	Less than 10%	5	4.54
	Not worked	0	0
Wage Payment	100% received	100	90.9
	Not received	10	9.1
Payment Mode	Bank	82	74.54
	Post Office	28	25.45
Other Source of Income	Yes	101	91.81
	No	9	8.18

The table 6 survey data states that, in Job card availability of MGNREGS, 86.36% of participants possess a job card, and 13.36% do not have a job card. It states that the scheme is widely covered in the Rayagada district. In job allocation, 77.27% of beneficiaries mentioned 100% of the jobs they do through this scheme, 13.63% less than the job allocation. 90.9% of participants noted receiving the wage payment properly, and 9.1% have not received the payment in time. It indicates the payment efficiency and needs policy attention. The majority, 74.54% have received payment through a bank account, while 25.45% used the post office. It shows good progress towards financial inclusion; 91.81% of households mentioned have additional sources of income besides their wage labour. Only 8.18% depend entirely on the scheme. It indicates partial economic diversification.

The results show that MGNREGS is well implemented in Rayagada, with strong coverage, high job allocation, and significant use of banking channels. However, challenges remain in ensuring timely wage payments and expanding opportunities for those still dependent solely on the scheme.

Table 7: Economic Indicators of MGNREGS

Economic Indicators		No of participants	Percentage
Level of Income	Good	5	4.54
	Average	68	61.81
	Bad	37	33.63
Education	Illiterate	58	52.73
	Literate	52	47.27
Qualifications	Up to the 10th	94	85.45
	Up to Graduate	16	14.54
Income of total family (per Year)	10000-100000	97	88.18
	100000-200000	13	11.81
	200000 and above	0	0
Availability of Land	Available	64	58.18
	Not Available	46	41.81
Reduction of Migration	Yes	101	91.81
	No	9	8.18
Improvement of economic condition	Yes	78	70.9
	No	32	29. 09

Table No.7 highlights various key findings regarding the economic indicators of MGNREGS beneficiaries. It shows in income levels, 4.54% of beneficiaries have a good income level, and the other 61.81% fall under the average category, while 33.63% are in terrible conditions because their income is less than other participants. Regarding education, 52.73% of the respondents are illiterate, whereas 47.27% are literate, reflecting a good literacy coverage. In qualification levels, 85.45% have completed up to the 10th standard, while 14.54% have pursued graduation, indicating minimum access to higher education. In family income, 88.18% of people have less than one lakh, and the rest have more than 1 lakh per year. In land ownership, 58.18% of the population have their own land, and the remaining 41.81% have no land. The MGNREGS has positively reduced the migration of people from their own village to other places in search of jobs. 91.81% of beneficiaries reported that they no longer migrated for work, with only 8.18% still moving to different places in search of employment.

Finally, 70.9% of respondents agreed that their economic conditions improved by getting work through MGNREGS, while 29.09% mentioned no improvement in their financial conditions.
This survey suggests that the scheme has made a meaningful impact in reducing distressed migration and improving livelihoods. Many challenges, such as stable income, landlessness, and higher education access, still need more improvement.

Table 8: Social Life Indicators of MGNREGS Participants

Social Life Indicators		No of participants	Percentage
Participate in a house event	Yes	68	61.81
	No	42	38.18
Participate in the Village event.	Yes	110	100
	No	0	0
Participate in Panchayat/Block event	Yes	15	13.63
	No	95	86.36
Participate in MGNREGS Gram Sabha	Yes	105	95.45
	No	5	4.54
Participate in a Central government event.	Yes	88	80
	No	22	20

Table 8 highlights the social life indicators of MGNREGS participants. A total of 61.81% of respondents mentioned active participation in household events, while 38.18% did not participate in these events. All participation in their village event shows a remarkable 100% involvement, which reflects a strong sense of collective community spirit and social cohesion among the beneficiaries. In the case of Panchayat/ Block level events, only 13.63% of respondents participated, while 86.36% did not participate in these events. It indicates a clear gap between villagers and the higher-level government administrative platform under MGNREGS.
Regarding Gram Sabha participation, 95.54% of respondents were actively engaged and attending the meeting, whereas 4.54% did not attend. It reflects a high motivation to participate in decision-making directly related to their livelihood. Regarding central government events, 80% respondents have mentioned agreeing to be involved, and 20% remained uninvolved.
Overall, data suggest that MGNREGS beneficiaries are strongly engaged in village-level and livelihood-related forums but show limited involvement in higher-level government processes.

Table 9: Beneficiaries' Monthly Expenditure Pattern

Expenditure head	Monthly expenditure(INR)	No of Participants	Percentage(%)
Food Expenditure	1000-2000	85	77.27
	More than 2000	25	22.73
Household expenditure	1000-2000	22	20
	More than 2000	88	80
Medical Expenditure	1000-2000	92	83.63
	More than 2000	18	16.36
Miscellaneous expenditure	1000-2000	85	77.27
	More than 2000	25	22.73

Table 9 highlights the monthly expenditure of MGNREGS beneficiaries. The survey found that in food expenditure, 85 or 77.27% of participants spend ₹1000–2000per month, and more than 25 participants or 22.73 % spend more than ₹2000. A maximum number of families spend a lower range of income on food. In household expenditure, 88 participants or 80% stated that they spend more than ₹2000, and only 22 or 20% spend between ₹1000–2000. This shows that they are compelled to spend more on utilities, rent, and daily essentials. In medical expenditure, 92 participants or 83.63% mentioned that they spend ₹1000–2000 per month, and 18 participants or16.36% or spend more than ₹2000. It shows that there is a moderate amount they spend on medical expenses because of chronic illness. In miscellaneous expenditure,85 participants or 77.27% spend ₹1000–2000 per month, and 25 participants or 22.73% spend more than ₹2000. This indicates they are making moderate expenditures due to their limited disposable income.
The above table highlights the monthly expenditure pattern of MGNREGS beneficiaries.

10. Suggestions and Recommendations

The following suggestions and recommendations have been made from this research.

11. Awareness

It has been in operation for a considerable time; a large proportion of labourers are still unaware of the scheme and its provisions. The lack of awareness prevents many people from accessing the benefits and claiming their rightful wages. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need to strengthen understanding and outreach initiatives so the program can effectively reach low-income groups and fulfil the objectives.

12. Payment

The scheme's main objective is to enhance the livelihood of rural and tribal people of India, and it can be possible if wages are paid regularly. However, it is observed that the implementing agencies pay wages with a delay ranging from 15 to 150 days. It discourages the labourers from engaging in this scheme. The payments under MGNREGS are to be made through banks and post offices; however, due to insufficient cash in post offices and the lack of banking facilities in rural villages, the workers are not getting their wages in time. The finding of this study highlights that the government should strengthen the payment systems of MGNREGS.

13. Limitations

The significant limitations of MGNREGS include inefficiency, corruption, the dominance of village leaders, a lack of transparency, and increased bureaucratic involvement. Rayagada district also faces a few instances of corruption. Fake job cards, late uploading of muster rolls, and delays in payment of wages and materials are the major issues with MGNREGS. In July 2025, the Odisha Vigilance arrested four officials for misappropriating government funds under this scheme in the Rayagada district. The government appoints an Ombudsman to conduct inquiries and submit reports on corruption in MGNREGS to the government in every district.

14. Conclusion

Rayagada district is inhabited by tribal communities and is experiencing poverty. The longest-lasting and successful program, MGNREGS, has emerged as a boon for them; it helps in enhancing livelihood security, improving economic conditions, and creating employment opportunities. It has played a significant role in helping people overcome chronic poverty and elevating their social and financial standing. However, to fully realise its potential, the scheme requires greater awareness among beneficiaries, a simplified payment system, and stronger coordination between government agencies and rural communities, and finally, zero corruption. Considerable effort and dedication are needed to achieve Viksit Bharat's dream, ensuring the objectives of MGNREGS are fully met in this region.

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