

Employment Challenges and Trends in India's Rural Labour Market with the Impact of MGNREGA

K. Gokul

Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Coimbatore, India

Corresponding Author: gokulk2004@yahoo.co.in

Received: 21-06-2021

Accepted: 29-07-2021

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to look at development trends and patterns of structural change in India's rural and labour markets. The rural labour strength have been moving from agricultural sector to non-agricultural sector for a living, after a long period of change (due to pain and growth-induced motives). Although the manufacturing sector lags, the building industry is a significant growing sector that employs rural people. Some improvements in rural areas have been made since the implementation of the MGNREGA rural employment development programme, but it has its own set of problems that experts are discussing. Furthermore, the rural labour market is plagued by high unemployment as a result of both the agricultural and non-farm sectors' failure to absorb rural employees. Nonetheless, the continuing COVID-19 epidemic has worsened its situation by causing a job-loss catastrophe. The rural labour market's future will become more unclear as a consequence of Covid pandemic-induced opposite migration of city workers to their villages, which has worsened food security and poverty issues in rural regions.

Keyword: rural, labour market, structural, MGNREGA

I. INTRODUCTION

A variety of information can be used to visualise the importance of India's rural labour market. According to reports, India will have a significant proportion of global labour supply over the next two decades Because of a demographic dividend of approximately 200 million working-age people (15-59 years old) between 2010 and 2030. According to 2011 Census data, more than 70.4% of India's population lives in rural areas. The aforementioned factors force one to analyse key employment trends and patterns of structural change in the rural labour market to map the rate of employment development in India.

Academicians and notable researchers in India are debating changes in the share of labour employed in various industries due to the substantial Economic development and structural changes have a symbiotic connection. The structural reorganisation of rural employment has been a subject of debate since the 1980s. Another way to say it is, various research in the 1980s and 1990s investigated structural transformation trends, patterns, and determinants. Similarly, studies done following the introduction of neoliberal policies sought to recognize the environment of rural labour strength change and the main problems surrounding it.

Numerous studies that have substantiated that India is experiencing a structural transformation of the workforce from the farm sector to the non-farm sector, although at a sluggish step have revealed the Himanshu et al. conducted a village study. (2011) suggested that the non-farm sector has aided rural workers in finding adequate employment options and alleviating poverty. Non-farm diversification, on the other hand, is a sluggish but steady process in India. Binswanger-Mkhize (2013), on the other hand, compared the structural transformations of India and China and found that China's structural transition is normal, whereas India's is "stunted."

To grasp nature of rural workforce alteration and variation, a thorough understanding of contemporary academic debates regarding the determining factors of rural labour transfers from farm to non-farm sectors is required. The migration of excess labour from traditional (agricultural and informal) to contemporary (industrial and formal) sectors has been a notable characteristic of India's economic development, which has followed Lewis's model. Mellor recognised the relevance of the agricultural sector in increasing non-farm employment in his 1976 study. Proposed many links between the two sectors (These are the production connections, consumption linkages, and prospective linkages.) Following Mellor's lead, a number of academics advocated for the "agricultural-led growth theory". Finding favourable correlations between agricultural and non-agricultural growth. Vaidyanathan (1986) proposed the "residual theory" after dismissing the previous study. He also found a link between the agriculture sector's unemployment rate and non-farm employment in rural regions. He referred to the non-

farm sector as the remaining sector and he defined it as follows: movement of workers from the farm to the non-farm sector for a living as a "Phänomenon of anguish." Students recognised different "push forces" following Vaidyanathan, including unemployment, poverty, low farm production, population pressure, landlessness, and inequality. Some researchers, on the other hand, have refuted the distress theory and said that casualization of the workforce has not been an indicator of distress because Wages in rural non-farm industries are thought to be higher (Binesh, 1994). While refuting the aforementioned hypotheses, Chandrasekhar (1993) noted how difficult it is to test the strength of a monotonic association between agricultural growth and the non-agricultural employments, and he proposed that the size of non-agricultural employment is the determin Based on the above, one might infer that rural worker spillover from the farm to the non-farm sector has resulted from a variety of factors. Furthermore, the variables influencing rural structural change vary from family to domestic, area to area, and state to state inside a nation.

This article's primary points are divided into three categories. To begin with, structural restructuring in the rural labour market is occurring, but at a pace that is insufficient to reap demographic advantages. Second, as a result of the government's embrace of neoliberal policies, the rural workforce is increasingly shifting to informal and casual employment, indicating a lack of good job opportunities. The third reason is that women are leaving the rural labour market, indicating a lack of safe and suitable employment alternatives for rural women and a decline in their economic status. It also indicates females' shifts toward unpaid domestic labour. The fourth point of the article is undeniably the innovative policy MGNREGA, a rural employment programme that has improved the circumstances of rural temporary workers, but much more has to be done on the government front to reduce rural worker poverty. The continuing Covid-19 epidemic has emphasised the need for increasing MGNREGA financing to enhance employment possibilities for rural people who have returned to their communities owing to job losses in metropolitan areas.

The first part of this study investigates the primary sources of income for India's rural labour. The second part shows the rural labour force growth from 1977 to 2018. This section focuses on employment growth in India during the new liberal reforms. The final part examines that change in the rural structural transformation after year 1991. This segment also discusses the main emerging themes in rural labour structural change. The fourth part discusses the MGNREGA and its function in rural regions. The sixth part examines how the continuing Covid-19 epidemic affects rural labourers. The closing part, which covers some future policy issues, is the last and sixth section.

II. RURAL EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

A complex structure of varied activity predominates in rural regions, with some of these non-farm businesses directly linked to the agricultural sector and others not. Nonfarm activities vary from full time but also temporary wage works in manufacturing / building to regular but part time and self employment in home based handcrafts work, trade, and other service activities.

The categorization of self-employment as a "poor quality source of income" (Raveenchandran et al., 2012) or "high skilled workers" requires one to claim that self- This problem is addressed in the table below (Table1).

Table 1: Rural Employment in India Distribution Subsequently 2011

Household Type	NSS 69th round (2011-12)	PLFS (2017-19)	PLFS (2019-20)
Self-employed in:			
Agriculture	34.4	36.8	35.8
non-agriculture	15.2	14.2	15.4
Self-employed	49.1	52.1	51.4
Regular income/ Salary earning	10.8	12.9	13.6
Casual labour in:			
Agriculture	21.1	12.5	11.4
non-agriculture	13.4	12.4	13.1
Casual labour	34.2	25.1	25.6
Others	6.5	10.2	10.7
All	100.12	100.12	100.12

Source: PLFS Annual Reports for 2019 and 2020

III. MAPPING INDIA'S RURAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Changes in the labor-force participation rate may help us understand the nature of long-term job growth. The WPR has shown general instability and a decrease during 1977-78. It was at its highest point in 1977-78 and at its lowest point in 2018-19, at 38.7 percent (Table 2). During 1999-2000, it fell by 39.6 percent as a result of Neoliberal reforms. It grew to 42.2 percent in 2004-05, with many scholars seeing distress as a major driver in this rise. A comparison of rural-urban UPSS, on the other hand, shows that the rural matching portion has always been greater than the urban matching part. It is noteworthy to note that the rural urban disparity between female UPSS has been narrowing from 2004-2018, owing primarily to a decrease in rural female UPSS. Scholars have identified numerous explanations in context, such as an increase in female enrolment ratio, an increase in male family income, a lack of suitable career possibilities, a lack of skills, and so on. It is also proven that they have switched to informal jobs and are responsible for domestic operations (which is mostly unpaid family labour).

Table 2: WPR (in %) in Normal Status (UPSS) at the all India level

Year (NSS round)	Rural			Urban			All		
	Male	Female	Individual	Male	Female	Individual	Male	Female	Individual
1977-78 (32nd)	55.1	33.2	44.4	50.5	15.5	34.2	54.4	29.4	42.6
1983 (38th)	54.5	34.1	44.6	51.1	15.6	34.5	53.5	29.5	42.1
1987-88 (43rd)	53.5	32.5	43.1	50.9	15.1	33.6	53.7	28.4	41.5
1993-94 (50th)	55.3	32.4	44.3	52.1	15.4	34.4	54.1	28.3	42.1
1999-00 (55th)	53.4	29.6	41.7	51.5	13.1	33.3	52.2	25.8	39.6
2004-05 (61st)	54.5	32.4	43.8	54.4	16.6	36.1	54.9	28.4	42.2
2009-10 (66th)	54.9	26.2	40.7	54.1	13.4	35.3	54.6	22.4	39.4
2011-12 (68th)	54.4	24.4	39.6	54.2	14.9	35.1	54.4	21.5	38.8
2017-18 (PLFS)	51.6	17.9	35.1	53.1	14.1	33.7	52.4	16.6	34.7

Source: Annual Report PLFS, 2018

Table 3 shows that the share of rural male employees involved in agricultural activities has continuously fallen from 80.8 percent in 1977-78 to 66.7 percent in 2004-05, The figure fell to 55.5 percent in 2017-18 and 54.6 percent in 2018-2019, from 59.8 percent in 2011-2012 to 57.6 percent in 2017-2018 and 53.2 percent in 2018-19. However, in rural regions, the percentage of female agricultural workers has fallen from 88.2 percent in 1977-1978 to 83.6 percent in 2004-2005 and 74.6 percent in 2011-2012, before dropping to 73.2 percent in 2017-18 and 71.1 percent in 2018-19. Construction is India's fastest-growing industry, indicating the casualization of non-farm employment. Work that demonstrates the growing relevance of low-wage jobs in India. In 2018-2019, the shares of male and female workers in the manufacturing sector in rural areas climbed to 7.3 percent and 9.0 percent, respectively. It's worth noting that over the years, From 1977-78 to 2018-19, rural male workers improved in the trade, construction, hotel and restaurant, storage, transport, and communications and other service sectors, while rural female workers increased in the manufacturing, trade, restaurant, hotel and other services.

Table 3: Percentage Circulation of Workers in Normal Position (ps+ss) in Rural Areas

Broad industry division	Category of worker	Year (NSS round)								
		1977-78 (32nd)	1983 (40th)	1987-1988 (46rd)	1993-1994 (55th)	1999-2000 (58th)	2004-2005 (67st)	2009-2010 (72th)	2011-2012 (74th)	2017-18 (PLFS)
Agriculture	Male	80.8	78.3	75.9	75.3	73.2	68.1	63.5	60.6	56.7
	Female	89.2	87.5	86.7	88.2	87.4	85.6	79.8	75.1	74.2
Mining & Quarrying	Male	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7
	Female	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Manufacturing	Male	8.2	8.5	7.9	7.5	7.7	8.0	7.5	8.5	7.9
	Female	6.1	6.7	6.9	8.0	7.9	8.8	7.9	9.9	8.8
Electricity, water, etc.	Male	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.6
	Female	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Construction	Male	1.9	2.4	3.9	3.6	4.9	6.8	11.6	13.3	14.8
	Female	0.8	0.9	3.7	1.6	1.5	1.8	5.4	6.9	5.2
Industry	Male	8.9	11.2	12.4	11.4	12.8	16.5	19.2	22.9	24.2
	Female	6.9	7.9	11	8.9	10	10.6	14	17.8	14.6
Trade, hotel & restaurant	Male	5.0	4.8	5.7	5.1	6.9	8.7	9.4	8.7	9.8
	Female	3.0	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.3	2.7	3.1	3.3	4.7
Transport, storage and communications	Male	1.7	1.9	2.5	2.8	3.6	3.9	4.8	4.9	5.5
	Female	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
Other services	Male	5.8	6.6	6.8	7.4	6.5	6.9	5.9	6.7	7.7
	Female	3.5	3.0	3.6	3.4	3.9	4.9	4.9	5.5	9.3
Services	Male	10.7	12.6	13.6	14.6	16.8	20	18.9	18.9	24
	Female	5.6	4.9	5.6	5.9	5.8	6.8	7.9	8.5	13.8
Non-farm	Male	19.5	22.3	25.8	26.2	28.9	33.7	37.4	40.6	45.8
	Female	11.9	12.4	15.7	14.9	14.9	16.9	20.9	25.6	26.9
All	-	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12	100.12

From 1999-2000, the construction sector's employment share began to rise. In 1993-04, the share of rural males employed in the transportation and storage sectors began to climb. From 1977-78 to 1993-94, the services sector showed a rising trend for rural male workers. The service industry continues to grow in importance for rural female employees. The loss in the farm industry's percentage of employment has been shifted to the tertiary sector.

The movement in employment from 1977-78 to 2017-18 illustrates that the farm sector has lost ground to the secondary industry. It is important to note that, compared to rural male workers, female workers in rural employment are highly engaged. One could conclude from the preceding discussion that rural employment has not undergone major structural change. Since the early 1990s, neoliberal policies have resulted in a decline in public spending, which has resulted in a rural workforce with an unaltered occupational structure, i.e., rural employees are still dependent on the agricultural area and informal non-farm detections. Clearly, the emerging patterns in the rural Indian budget have been poor service quality as a result of three primary factors: the first, the continued dominance of agriculture in employment⁵, the second, the preponderance of informal employment, and the third, the continued dominance of agriculture in employment⁵.

In 2004-05, the unorganised sector generated Rs. 62, compared to Rs. 239 in the organised sector. In terms of social safety nets, the self-employed and casual labour groups dominate as regular employer categories, accounting for a small fraction of the total workforce.

The three main features of the rural labour force that have developed are as follows: increased non-farm work, increased casualization and informalization and de-feminisation.

3.1. Non-Farm Employment Increasing at an Alarming Rate

As shown by the debate, the agricultural industry remains the major source of livelihood for India's rural workforce, but the gap between job searchers in rural areas and employment chances in the farm sector is spreading. The non-farm sector played a key part in rural diversification since the majority of people in rural India diversify their sources of income. In between 1999-

2000 and 2011-2012, the average yearly growth rate of real GDP was 7.4 percent, total rural employment increased at a 0.81 percent annual rate (i.e. less than one percent per year), and rural non-farm employment expanded at a considerable rate. In 1977-78, the non-farm sector employed 19.3 percent of rural men and 11.8 percent of rural females, respectively, while it employed 45.7 percent and 27.5 percent of males and females, respectively in 2017-2018.

IV. CASUALISATION AND INFORMALISATION ARE BECOMING MORE PREVALENT

The increasing casualisation and informalisation of India's rural labour is one of the most notable traits. Following 1991, neoliberal reforms resulted in a decrease in farm employment and an increase in rural workforce employment in the 'construction, commerce, and hotels', which remain basically low-productivity areas with a bigger degree of familiarity, which is an indication of an increase in informality. Regular or salaried workers who are not protected by social security, Table 4 accurately represents a higher degree of informality in the rural sector. There are two obstacles to overcome. The first is to boost agricultural and informal sector productivity. The second task is to retrain these employees in high-productivity industries while simultaneously creating new opportunities outside of agriculture.

Table 4: The Percentage of Rural Regular Salary/Paid Staffs in Regular Status (ps+ss) Working in the Non-Agriculture Sector in India, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019

category of regular wage/salaried employees	percentage of regular wage/salaried employees who had no written Job contract		percentage of regular wage/salaried employees not eligible for paid leave		percentage of regular wage/salaried employees not eligible for any social security benefit	
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019	2017-2018	2018-2019
Male	72.7	70.7	59.3	58.9	52.7	56.8
Female	58.9	58.9	48.5	49.8	55.6	57.9
Person	69.6	68.4	56.6	56.9	52.6	56.5

Source: Annual Report PLFS, 2020.

4.1 De-Feminization is on the Rise

The rising withdrawal of females from the economy has been a notable trend in the rural labour force. While rural men are progressively moving into non-farm jobs, particularly construction labour, With a WRP of 34.1 percent in the year 1983 and 19.0 percent in 2018-19, rural women seem to be trapped in agriculture (table 2). compared to 54.5 percent in the year 1983 and 52.6 percent in the year 2018-2019 for Despite this, due to agrarian distress, rural women's WPR grew from 29.9% to 32.7 percent in 1999-2000 and 2004-2005, respectively. The trend of defeminization has been a source of worry and controversy among academics. Less employment opportunities for rural females, increasing school enrollment, better family economic circumstances, patriarchal pressure, cultural norms, safety concerns, and inferior skills have all played a role. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that women's economic situation has improved as a result of the MGNREGA. It is evident that in 2004-2005, just 1.9 percent of rural women worked in the construction industry, but this increased to 6.6 percent in 2011-2012 (table 5), resulting in an increase in marginal category workers among rural women (table 2). Despite the foregoing, it is legitimate to note (on the basis of wide industry classification) that rural females have a higher share of employment in agriculture, manufacturing, and other services than rural males (Table 2).

From the preceding discussion, one may conclude that there was a significant disparity between prospective During 2017-18, both male and female labour supply and reallabourpreoccupation were low, since WPR was the lowest at the time 51.9 percent for males and 17.8 percent for females, respectively (WPR in rural regions has accelerated in India over time, but at a moderate pace (Table 2). This resulted in a substantial rise in unemployment (15-29 year-old men) in India, which grew from 6.8 million in 2012 to 21.6 million in 2018.

4.2 MGNREGA and Its Implications for the Rural Employment

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) passed by the Ministry of Rural Development and it is a critical step in improving the welfare of rural and underserved communities and increasing rural employment.

Several employment schemes such as Employment Assurance Schemes (EAS), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), and others, have been implemented in the past. MGNREGA, on the other hand, was implemented in three phases: in the first phase (2 February

2006), it was introduced in 200 rural districts; in the second phase (2007-2008), it was introduced in 200 rural districts. Indeed, when NREGA was launched on 08-09-2005, it also merged with the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), and Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana, all of which were operational at MGNREGA. MGNREGA seeks to improve the living security of rural side poor people by providing at least one hundred days of paid work to every family with mature members ready to do untrained manual labour. It not only offers a source of revenue via wage labour, but it also generates long-term assets like road building, land growth, water preservation and irrigation infrastructure, all of which have a major effect on different aspects of the village economy. As a result, Desai et al. claim that distressed migration weakens workers' negotiating strength.

According to (2015), MGNREGA decreased short-term distress relocation by 23% (rather than long-term migration), but not long-term migration, suggesting that MGNREGA has proved to be a safety net while having little impact on structural change. Though it has a direct impact on participants, the general equilibrium effects, or benefits to non-participants, have been a source of controversy among academics. One of its goals is to strengthen the negotiating power of workers who are frequently subjected to unfair market conditions. Several studies have revealed that agricultural incomes have increased dramatically since the scheme's introduction, particularly for women. It has been suggested that as a result of it, rural earnings have increased by 1% to 9%. Similarly, Azam (2012) discovered that it resulted in an increase of 8% in female farm wages and 1% in male farm earnings. Desai et al., (2015) further stated that MGNREGA assets have decreased farmers' vulnerability, which has aided the agricultural industry by increasing cropping intensity, expanding land area, and planting more commercial crops.

Through increased school enrollment, MGNREGA may have contributed to narrowing the gap between the employment of non-farm employee workers' children and that of MGNREGA employees' children. Children from MGNREGA families are more likely to achieve higher educational level and better learning outcomes than their non-MGNREGA work.

MGNREGA has certainly altered the rural labour marketplace, but agricultural remains at the fundamental of rural Indian life style. Nevertheless, non-farm employment is growing more popular among both men and women. Even in the absence of MGNREGA, many men and women mix agricultural and non-farm work. MGNREGA employs just 13% of rural males and 10% of rural women between the ages of 15 and 59. The average number of days worked in MGNREGA at the population level is fewer than four. As a consequence, MGNREGA accounts for just a tiny proportion of the rural labour market. Despite the fact that this programme provides many women with their first chance to earn a cash income, over 45 percent of female MGNREGA employees in rural regions were either jobless or working only on a family farm. Between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 rural earnings increased dramatically, although the growth was bigger at top of the pay distribution than at bottom. Between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012, men's daily agricultural earnings rose by 50%, while women's wages increased by 48%. Table 5 specifies the decline in contribution rates from 2011-2012 to 2013-2014.

Table 5 Decrease in the national contribution rate in MGNREGA

Year	Total rural households (crore)	Total rural households worked in MGNREGA (crore)	Participation rate (%)
2011-2012	16.92	5.08	30.3
2012-2013	17.32	5.28	29.7
2013-2014	17.31	4.91	27.9

V. COVID-19'S EFFECTS ON RURAL EMPLOYMENT

Both the agricultural and non-farm sectors in India were already unable to absorb a growing labour force due to a decrease in their value addition over time. The pace of increase in gross value-added in India's manufacturing sector has already slowed owing to a decrease in both domestic demand and exports, and the impact of credit shortages. We can observe that the rate of increase of gross value-added in industrial fell from 6.9 percent to 2.3 percent between 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The same fell from 3.0 to 2.9 percent in the agricultural and allied industries, 7.0 to 2.6 percent in manufacturing, 8.9 to 3.7 percent in construction, and 7.6 to 7.0 percent in services. GDP at market prices dropped from 6.9 percent to 5.1 percent over the time period under attention (Economic Survey in the year 2019-2020). Likewise, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) survey of enterprises (small, micro, and mediumsized enterprises) which are conducted in May 2020 revealed that COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Indian manufacturing sector, as manufacturing in enterprises involved in activities such as automotive.

To offset the negative effects on rural employment, the Indian government is assisting state governments in expanding income and employment opportunities in the rural areas through a number of Ministry of Rural Development programmes, including the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission. (Despite no work cards being issued from

April 1, 2020 to September 12, 2020, the government's welfare programmes have resulted in an increase in the number of job cards issued, which increased to 87,24,537 in fiscal year 2020-2021 from 37,65,369 in fiscal year 2019-2020. For the fiscal year 2020-2021, total employment creation was 21,204.91 lakh person days, and total wage expenditure was Rs. 43,19,283.31 lakh (from April 1 to September 12). With effect from April 1, 2020, the federal government raised MG-NREG pay by an average of Rs. 20 (rising to Rs. 202 per person from Rs. 182) and granted Rs. 4,476 crores to states and UTs for the MGNREGA salaries. It is worth noting that the MGNREGS came to a halt as a consequence of the lockdown announcement, and no employment were generated under the programme for about a month. Following a government decision, the MGNREGA work was freed from the lockdown restrictions on April 20, 2020. (on the 15th of April, 2020).

Furthermore, on May 12, 2020, the government announced a Rupees 20 trillion (about 10% of GDP) economic package as part of the Atmanirbhar Abhiyan (Self-Reliance Mission) to improve the economy's supply-side capabilities. In a sense, the Indian government also sanctioned Rupees 401 billion for MGNREGA to increase rural people's buying power (including migrant workers). Similarly, to boost activity and preserve employment in small companies (micro, small, and medium enterprises), the government launched a Rs. 3.1 trillion collateral-free lending programme that enabled any street vendor in rural and urban regions to receive a bank loan of up to Rs. 10,500. Furthermore, several states such as Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh modified the terms of the Factories Act, 1948 in April of this year to increase working hours (from 8 - 12 hours daily or 48 - 72 hours weekly) for the welfare of employees.

India is projected to experience a significant economic crisis and employment loss in the near future as a result of the continuing issue. In context, India Today projected on June 16, 2020 that the Covid-19 pandemic will cost the country 130 million jobs. According to a joint report released by the International Labour Organization and the Asian Development Bank in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic cost the country over 41.5 lakh young people their employment, with construction and farm workers accounting for the majority of job losses.

VI. CONCLUSION

The process of structural change is a well-known result of the developmental process. It has been going on since the 1980s, but there are various issues about it, such as a shortage of industrial employment, the growth of unorganised employment, and the retreat of women from the workforce, to name a few. One could argue that structural change should focus on moving from a low-productivity, low-wage segment to a high wage, high productivity industry with some sensible social security. More skill enhancement initiatives for men and women, provision of extensive and safe job chances for women, more initiatives in the agricultural, manufacturing and service sectors and provision of adequate social security measures for informal or casual workers should all be high on the priority list when developing rural development policies. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be necessary to develop a medium-and long-term strategy for managing sluggish demand and accelerating the revival of the rural labour market by promoting jobs with the social security initiatives, increasing rural economic productivity, and providing adequate health facilities.

REFERENCES

1. Sheela Kharkwal, & Anil Kumar. (2015). Socio-Economic impact of MGNREGA: Evidences from district of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, India. *Indian Journal of Economics and Development*, 3(12), 1-10.
2. V. David, & Chella Basker. (2013). Socio-economic impact of MGNREGA in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, 2(12), 1-2.
3. K.T. Karthika. (2015). Impact of MGNREGA on socio-economic development & women empowerment. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 17(7), 16-19.
4. Ahangar, G.B. (2014). Women empowerment through MGNREGA: A case study of block Shahabad of district Anantnag, Jammu and Kashmir. *National Monthly Refereed Journal of Research In Commerce & Management*, 3, 55-62.
5. Bhattacharyya, M. (2016). Drawing a link— Women's empowerment and Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act: A study conducted in the Goalpara district. *Assam. Space and Culture, India*, 3(3), 21-27.
6. Singh S, Negi RS, Dhanai R, & Rahul, M.D. (2017). Socio-economic impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA): A case study in Pauri Garhwal district of Uttarakhand. *Indian J. of Social Res.*, 58(5), 745-75.
7. Imbert, C., & Papp, J. (2020b). Short-term migration, rural public works, and urban labor markets: Evidence from India. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18(2), 927-963.