

Research Article

Awareness Level of MGNREGA: An Assessment Study in Aligarh District

Saba Iqbal^{1*} and Syed Nadeem Fatmi²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh-202001, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Professor, Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women's Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi-110025, India

*Corresponding author email id: iqbalsaba5@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the awareness levels of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Aligarh District, with a specific focus on Block Jawan Sikanderpur. Data was collected from 150 respondents across ten villages. Findings reveal varying awareness levels influenced by factors such as education, socio-economic status, and proximity to administrative centers. Higher levels of education and socio-economic status are associated with increased awareness. Furthermore, heightened awareness is positively correlated with greater participation in MGNREGA. These insights underscore the importance of targeted awareness campaigns and improved accessibility to program information. These efforts are essential for maximizing the impact of MGNREGA in alleviating rural unemployment and poverty in Aligarh District.

Keywords: Awareness, Proximity, Administration, Education, Wage

INTRODUCTION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (Mahatma Gandhi NREGA) aims to enhance the livelihood security of rural households by guaranteeing at least 100 days of wage employment to each household's willing adult members for unskilled manual labor during a fiscal year. The effects of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA on social protection, livelihood security, and democratic governance have established it as a potent tool for inclusive growth in rural India. The Act was implemented gradually, taking effect on February 2, 2006. Phase I introduced it in 200 of the nation's

most impoverished districts, followed by Phase II in 2007-2008, which extended to an additional 130 districts. Phase III began on April 1, 2008, covering all remaining rural districts in India.

In the vast tapestry of India's rural landscape, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) shines as a beacon of hope, offering employment and socio-economic security to millions. Enacted in 2005, this transformative policy initiative has the potential to uplift the lives of the country's rural population. However, the effectiveness of MGNREGA depends not only on its provisions but also on the awareness and understanding of these provisions among the very people it seeks to empower.

This paper embarks on a crucial journey to Aligarh District, nestled in the heart of Uttar Pradesh, to uncover the layers of awareness surrounding the MGNREGA scheme. Aligarh, like many other regions across India, grapples with rural unemployment and poverty, making MGNREGA an essential lifeline. Our focus narrows further to Block Jawan Sikanderpur, where we aim to assess the awareness levels of this rural employment scheme. Within this block, we engage with 150 respondents from ten distinct villages, each representing a unique socio-cultural and economic milieu. Through this endeavor, we seek to shed light on the factors influencing awareness levels, the implications of awareness on program utilization, and, ultimately, how these findings can inform targeted policies and interventions.

This study goes beyond a mere exploration of awareness; it represents a pivotal step toward understanding the crucial role that information and awareness play in the successful implementation of social welfare programs like MGNREGA. In a world where knowledge is power, uncovering the awareness levels of MGNREGA in Aligarh District becomes a quest for empowerment and rural development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study is to examine the beneficiaries' level of awareness regarding various MGNREGA provisions.

Specifically

To study the demographic profile of the respondents. To study the awareness level of the respondents regarding various provisions of MGNREGA.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sharma and Singh (2019) found, in their study, that the overall awareness level of the MGNREGA scheme among the beneficiaries in Aligarh district was low. However, there

was a significant difference in awareness levels between different groups of beneficiaries. For instance, male beneficiaries were more aware of the scheme than female beneficiaries, and educated beneficiaries were more aware than uneducated ones.

Kumar and Singh (2017) in their study, “Factors Affecting Awareness Level of MGNREGA Scheme among Beneficiaries in Aligarh District, Uttar Pradesh,” identified several factors influencing awareness levels of the MGNREGA scheme in Aligarh district. These factors included education, gender, social status, access to information, and exposure to the media. The study found that more educated, male, and higher social status beneficiaries were more aware of the scheme. Beneficiaries with access to information and media exposure were also more aware of the scheme.

Singh (2015) assessed the impact of the MGNREGA scheme on the livelihood of beneficiaries in Aligarh district. The study found that the scheme had a positive impact on the livelihood of beneficiaries, providing them with a source of income, improving their access to food, and helping them send their children to school.

Monika (2017) conducted a survey in Badhra Block in Bhiwani District (Haryana) to examine the level of awareness among participating female beneficiaries of the plan. The study revealed that women were particularly aware of the daily wage rate (76%) and the provision of equal remuneration for men and women, which is a significant aspect of MNREGA (66%). Workplace facilities were the most attractive feature for women.

Kumar (2017) conducted a study on the impact of MNREGA and the level of awareness on the socio-economic profile of rural women in the Faizabad district block of Milkipur. The study found significant differences between recipients and non-recipients in terms of socio-economic variables such as education, housekeeping, occupation, annual income, and social participation.

Farooqi and Saleem (2015) examined the effectiveness of MGNREGA for women’s empowerment in raising their living standards through 100 days of guaranteed employment in rural areas of Aligarh district (Uttar Pradesh). The results revealed that Gram Panchayats had limited success in increasing awareness among locals, especially women, about the system. They could provide advice on specific issues like the minimum wage and 15-day wages, among others.

Dey (2014) researched two Gram Panchayats in Jhalawar district, Rajasthan, where the workforce was primarily women from marginalized sections of society. Men viewed MGNREGA as work meant for women, which, combined with short workweeks and low pay rates, resulted in a disproportionately high proportion of female employees. People in these Panchayats were aware of MGNREGA but not its legal provisions.

Das and Basu (2013) examined northern regions of West Bengal and found that few beneficiaries there were aware of the MGNREGA program. Only 41% of the beneficiaries were aware of the program, and only 32% were aware of the requirements for participation. The study identified social status, gender, and education as significant factors influencing awareness levels.

Sivasankari and Bharathi (2012) found in their study that awareness levels of the MGNREGA scheme were higher among beneficiaries in Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, compared to the northern parts of West Bengal. However, even in Tirunelveli district, only 65% of the beneficiaries were aware of the scheme. Education and gender were identified as important factors influencing awareness levels.

METHODOLOGY

There are 12 blocks in Aligarh district. Only 10 village panchayats of Jawan Sikanderpur Block have been selected for the purpose of the study. These are Rathgawan, Ahak, Jatpura, Daupur, Imlauth, Kithara, Siya Khas, Satha, Sapera Bhanpur, and Jamalpur Siya. The total sample size is 150, and 15 samples from each village panchayat have been selected randomly from Jawan Sikanderpur Block. The targeted groups for the study were the beneficiaries of MGNREGA.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected through questionnaires and personal interviews. A structured questionnaire was designed to find out the responses of beneficiaries and studying the level of awareness about the various provisions of MGNREGA. The sources of secondary data included various books, magazines, journals, internet and official website of MGNREGA of Aligarh district. The study is limited to the 10 village panchayats of Jawan Sikanderpur Block of Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section, the data collected from the respondents through the questionnaire has been analyzed through charts and table. This section has two parts, first part deals with the analysis of the demographic profile of respondents and the second section deals with the analysis of the awareness level of the respondents regarding the various provisions of the MGNREGA.

Section A: Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section deals with the analysis of the data related to the socio-demographic profile of the sample respondents from block Jawan Sikanderpur.

Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

From the above Table 1 and Figure 1 show that, Out of the selected 150 respondents, 74 percent of the respondents are male and 26 percent of them are female who are employed in the MGNREGA scheme.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	111	74
Female	39	26
Total	150	100

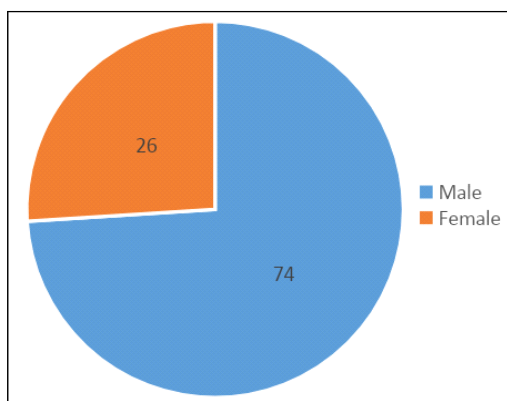


Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender

Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

From the above Table 2 and Figure 2, it is found that 17.33 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 18-20 years, 19.33 percent are from 21-30 age group, 26 percent and 30.66 percent from age group 31-40 years and 41-50 years respectively. While only 6.67 percent belong to the age group 51 years and above,

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
18-20 years	6	4.00
21-30 years	29	19.33
31-40 years	39	26.00
41-50 years	46	30.66
51-60 years	26	17.33
61 years and above	4	2.66
Total	150	100

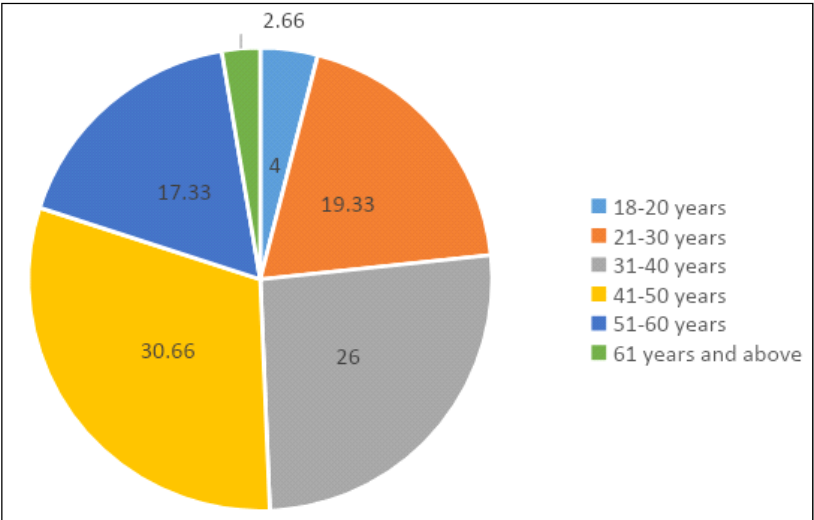


Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Religious Affiliation of the Respondents

The above Table 3 and Figure 3 shows that out of 150 respondents from Block Jawan Sikanderpur, 70 percent of the respondents are from Hindu religion whereas, only 30 percent are from Muslim religion.

Table 3: Religious Affiliation of the Respondents		
Religion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hindu	105	70
Muslim	45	30
Total	150	100

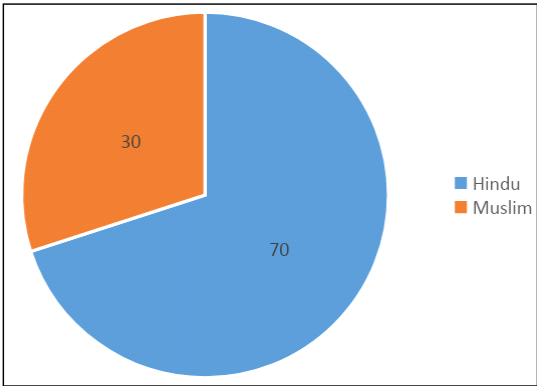


Figure 3: Religious Affiliation of the Respondents

Social Group of Respondents

The above Table 4 and Figure 4 shows that 36 percent of respondents belongs to OBCs, 35.33 percent belong SCs, and 28.67 percent are from Generals category working under the MGNREGA scheme.

Table 4: Social Group of Respondents

Social Group	No. of Beneficiaries	Percentage
General	43	28.67
OBCs	54	36.00
SCs	53	35.33
Total	150	100

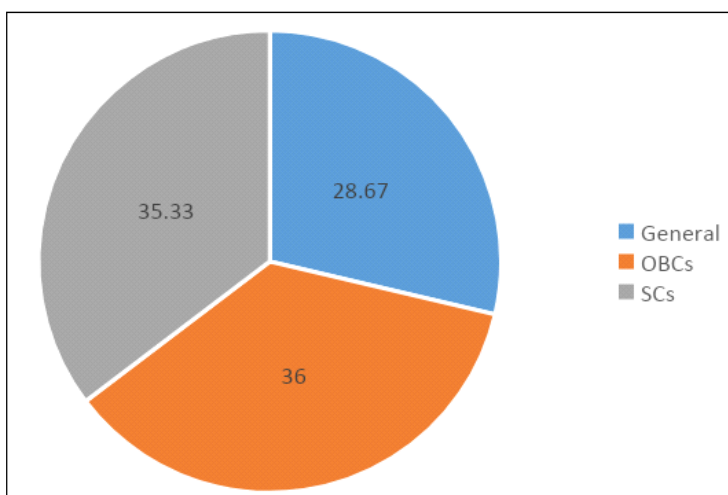


Figure 4: Social Group of Respondents

Marital Status of the Respondents

The Table 5 and Figure 5 above shows that 88 percent of the beneficiaries are married, 8.67 percent are unmarried, and 3.33 percent are divorced who are employed in the MGNREGA scheme.

Table 5: Marital Status of the Respondents

Marital status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Married	132	88
Unmarried	13	8.67
Divorced	5	3.33
Total	150	100

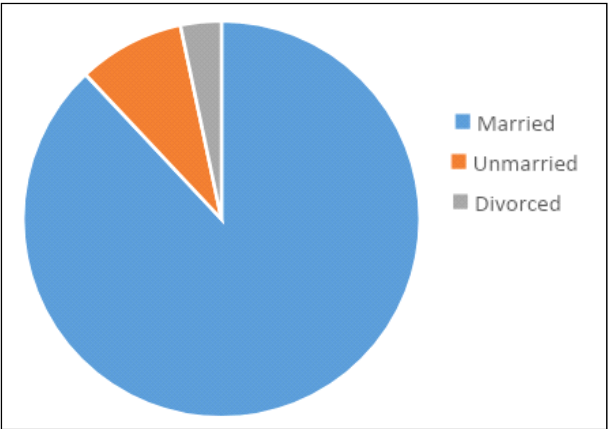


Figure 5: Marital Status of the Respondents

Educational level of Respondents

The above and Table 6 and Figure 6 shows the educational level of the respondents working under MGNREGA. Where, 42 percent of respondents are illiterate, while 58 percent are literate-from which 16 percent of the respondents receive education up to primary level, 18 percent up to middle level,10.67 up to High school while 13.33 percent of the respondents are educated up to intermediate and graduate level.

Table 6: Educational level of Respondents

Educational level of Respondents	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	63	42
Primary	24	16
Middle	27	18
High school	16	10.67
Intermediate	11	7.33
Graduate	9	6
Total	150	100

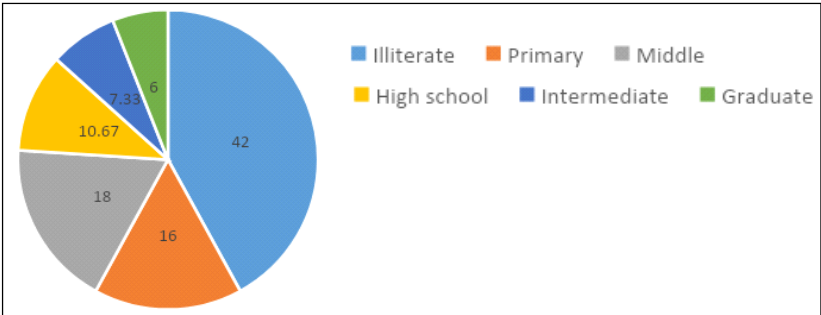


Figure 6: Educational level of Respondents

Section B: Analysis of the level of awareness of the respondents.

This section deals with the analysis of the data related to the awareness level of MGNREGA beneficiaries/respondents

Provision of Guaranteed 100 days of Employment

MGNREGA ensures 100 days of Guaranteed Employment for a household in a Financial Year. The table shows the awareness level of beneficiaries about the guaranteed 100 days of employment.

Jawan Sikandarpur block of Aligarh district reveals that 96.67 percent of respondents are aware about the provision of guaranteed 100 days of employment and 3.33 percent of the respondents are unaware of this provision (Table 7 and Figure 7).

Table 7: Provision of Guaranteed 100 days of employment

Guaranteed 100 days of employment	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	145	96.67
Unaware	5	3.33
Total	150	100

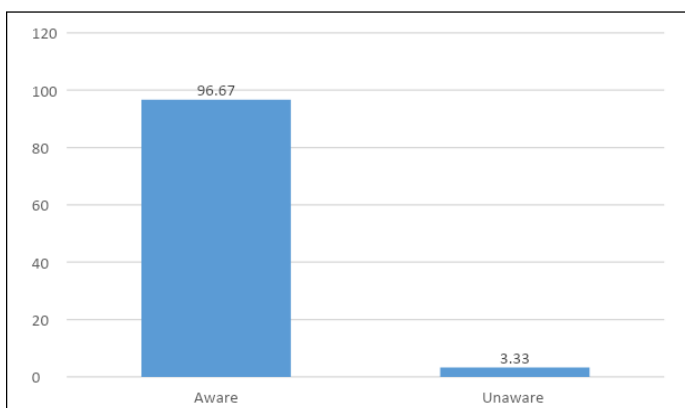


Figure 7: Provision of Guaranteed 100 days of employment

Work within Fifteen Days of Application

In order to apply for work under the scheme, a written application is to be submitted at the Block office or GP. It should have all the details related to the time and duration of the work. The Gram panchayat issues a receipt of the written application for employment, and work is allotted against it. The table given below presents the level of awareness of beneficiaries of the MGNREGA scheme about the provision of work within 15 days of application.

The above Table 8 and Figure 8 indicate that 62.33 percent of Respondents are aware of the provision of work within 15 days of application, while on the block level, Jawan Sikanderpur shows that 64.67 percent of beneficiaries are aware, and Dhanipur shows that 60 percent of Respondents are aware of this provision of work within 15 days of application.

Table 8: Work within fifteen days of application

Work within 15 days of application	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	97	64.66
Unaware	53	35.33
Total	150	100

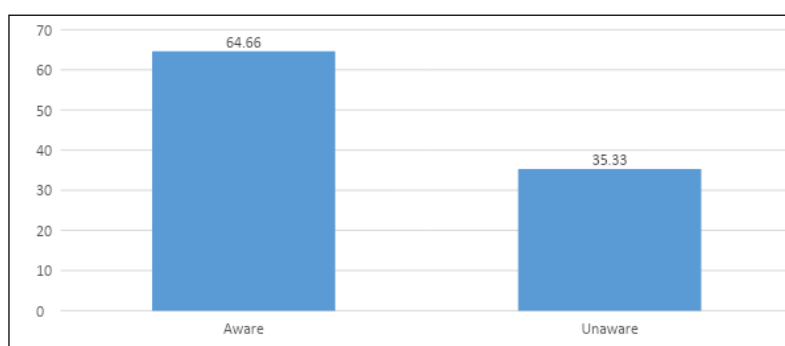


Figure 8: Work within fifteen days of application

Unemployment Allowance

As per the MGNREGA scheme, if in case of employment is not provided to beneficiaries within 15 days, the state has to pay unemployment allowance to the beneficiary. The table depicts the awareness of beneficiaries about the Unemployment Allowance.

The above Table 9 and Figure 9 show that only 4 percent of the beneficiaries are aware of the provision of unemployment allowance, whereas 96 percent of the respondents do not have any awareness about the provision.

Table 9: Unemployment Allowance

Unemployment Allowance	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	6	4
Unaware	144	96
Total	150	100

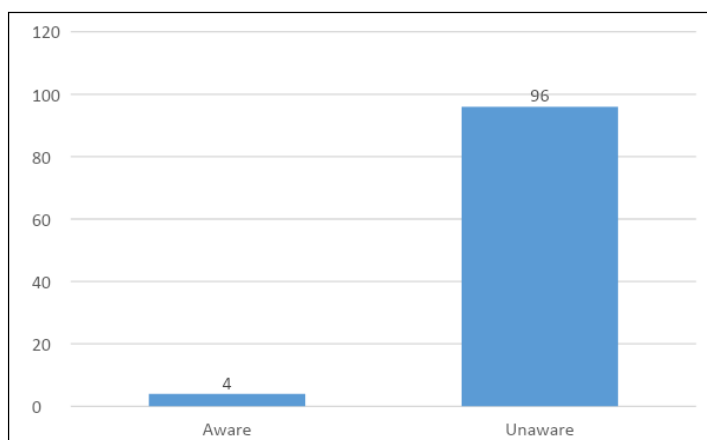


Figure 9: Unemployment Allowance

Awareness about the Provision of Work within a 5 km of Radius

The MGNREGA Work is provided within 5 kilometres (km) radius of the village. In case work is not provided within the given distance, extra wages of 10 percent will be payable to meet additional transportation and living expenses of the beneficiaries. The above Table 10 and Figure 10 disclose the level of awareness of beneficiaries about the provision, i.e., work within a 5 km radius of the village. A total of 86.67% of the respondents are aware about the provision while 13.33 percent are unaware.

Table 10: Work within a 5 km of radius

Work within a 5 km of radius	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	130	86.67
Unaware	20	13.33
Total	150	100

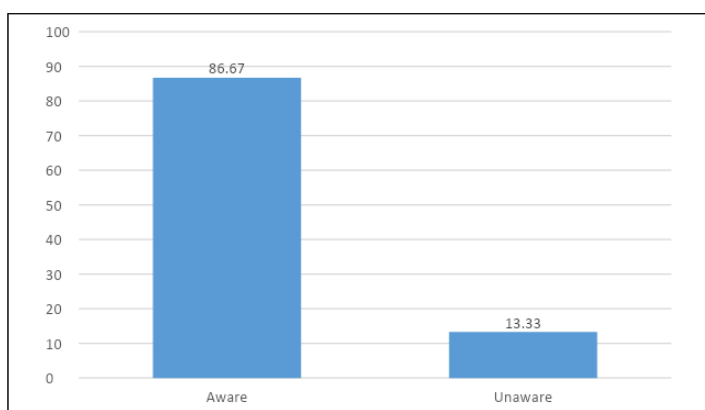


Figure 10: Awareness about Provision of Work within a 5 km of radius

Worksite Facilities

The Table 11 shows the respondent's awareness level about worksite facilities such as crèches, drinking water and shade that have to be provided at all worksites. The above Table 11 and Figure 11 disclose the level of awareness of beneficiaries about worksite facilities that should be made available to them. A total of 63.33 percent of beneficiaries are unaware, and 36.67 percent are aware of this provision of worksite facilities.

Table 11: Worksite facilities

Worksite facilities	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	55	36.67
No	95	63.33
Total	150	100

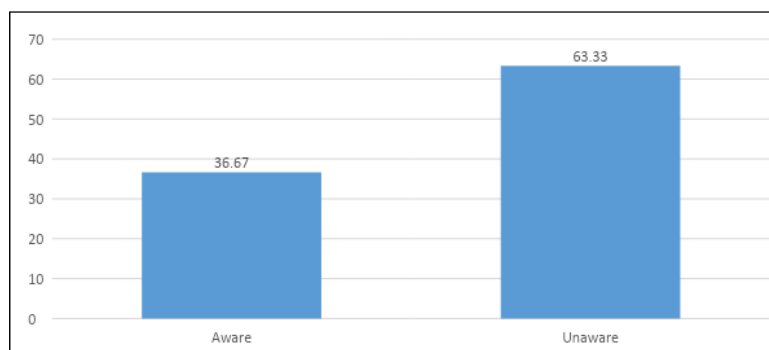


Figure 11: Worksite Facilities

Attendance in Muster Roll

Wage payments to respondents are calculated on the basis of attendance and measurements listed on Muster Rolls (MR). Muster rolls are supposed to be available at worksites and updated every day.

It is found that from 150 respondents, 85.33 percent of its respondents of MGNREGA scheme are aware about attendance in muster roll while 14.67 percent are unaware of the entries that should be made in the muster roll (Table 12 and Figure 12).

Table 12: Attendance in Muster roll

Attendance in Muster Roll	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Aware	22	14.67
Unaware	128	85.33
Total	150	100

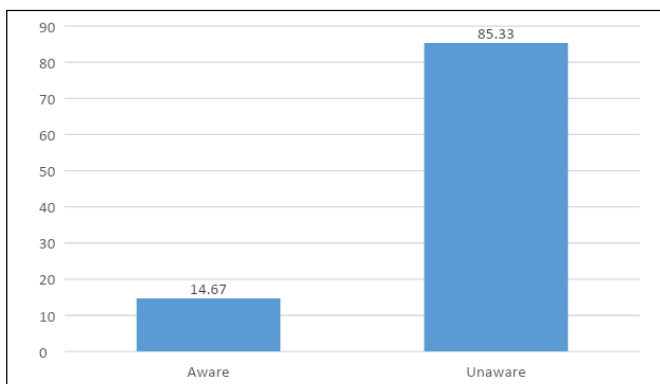


Figure 12: Attendance in Muster roll

Information about the Usage of web site

The table represent that if respondents know the Usage of the MGNREGA website or not?

The above Table 13 and Figure 13 show that 96.67 percent of the respondents do not know the use of websites, and only 3.33 percent of the respondents know about the use of websites related to MGNREGA.

Table 13: Information about the Usage of web site

Usage of Website	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	5	3.33
No	145	96.67
Total	150	100

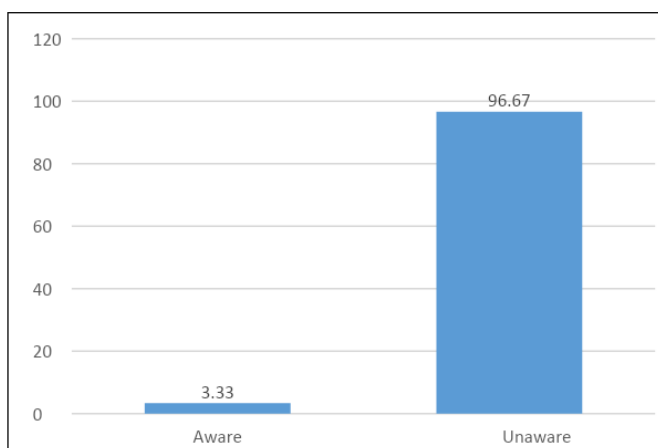


Figure 13: Information about the Usage of web site

FINDINGS

Findings of the study's objectives have been summarized in the following sections:

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The majority (74 percent) of the surveyed respondents were male, with only 26 percent being female. In terms of age groups, around one-third of the respondents were in the 41-50 years category, followed by 31-40 years (26 percent) and 23.33 percent in other age groups. Religious identity: 70 percent were Hindus, and 30 percent were Muslims. Social categories: 36 percent belonged to Other Backward Classes (OBC), 35.33 percent to Scheduled Castes (SC), and 28.67 percent to the general category. Education status: 42 percent were illiterate, 21.67 percent had middle-level education, 14.33 percent had an education up to High School, 18 percent had primary-level education, 7.33 percent had intermediate education, and 6 percent had completed Graduation. Marital status: 88 percent were married, 8.67 percent were unmarried, and only 3.33 percent were divorced.

Awareness Level of the Respondents Regarding Various Provisions of MGNREGA

About 96.67 percent of respondents were aware of the provision guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a year, while 3.33 percent were unaware. Regarding the allotment of work within fifteen days of application, 64.67 percent were aware, while 35.33 percent were unaware. Awareness of the provision of unemployment allowance was low, with only about 4 percent aware, while the remaining 96 percent were unaware. Awareness about the provision of allotment of work within a five-kilometer radius was at 86.67 percent, with 13.33 percent being unaware. About 36.67 percent of respondents were aware of worksite facilities, and 63.33 percent were unaware. Only 14.67 percent were aware of the daily updation of attendance in the muster roll, while 85.33 percent were unaware. Approximately 3.33 percent knew how to use the MGNREGA website, while 96.67 percent did not.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study first analyzed the demographic aspects of the beneficiaries and found that most were male, belonged to OBCs and SCs, and were aged 41-50, with many being illiterate.

The level of awareness among the workers regarding various provisions of the Act was then analyzed. Most respondents were aware of the provision of a hundred-day guarantee, but awareness of other provisions, such as worksite facilities and unemployment allowances, was low.

Suggestions

Increase the number of employment days: Extend the employment days beyond 100, considering that multiple earning members typically register under one job card.

Implement unemployment allowance: Ensure that the State government pays unemployment benefits within 15 days of demand, as mandated by MGNREGA.

Initiate awareness generation programs: Organize awareness campaigns at the grassroots level using traditional communication methods to educate people about MGNREGA provisions, particularly targeting disadvantaged sections.

Proper attendance monitoring: Implement an e-muster system to reduce fake attendance and ensure accurate attendance records.

Training in information technology: Provide regular formal and informal training for elected officials and functionaries, emphasizing the use of information technology.

Provide worksite facilities: Make available all worksite facilities prescribed in the program's provisions, such as drinking water, shade, and first aid.

Reduce wage payment delays: Create a weekly plan to expedite the wage payment process by addressing delays at various stages of the process.

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