WORK DEMAND PATTERN ANALYSIS FOR MGNREGA: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 18 INDIAN STATES

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Abstract

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) is Indian government's flagship social safety net program. World Bank in year 2015 announced MGNREGA as world's largest public employment guarantee program. According to an India Today (February, 2016) report, around 200 million people were provided with work under MGNREGA. The present study focuses upon 18 select Indian states' work demand pattern under MGNREGA. Each state chosen under study has a specific geographic location, weather pattern, economy and population. Month wise data (secondary in nature) of work demand (in terms of number of persons) for years 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 for all the selected 18 states have been considered for the analysis. The research hypothesis states that there were no differences between four years' work demand pattern for each state. The result varied significantly: twelve states had no significant differences between four years' work demand pattern, while six states had significant differences between four years' work demand pattern. The research outcome explains that every state has a unique work demand pattern and the work demand pattern varies depending upon factors such as weather system of the state, other available employment opportunities, poor implementation at Panchayat (village governing body) level and low awareness amongst rural people. The research outcome could help government to understand the varying nature of work demand in each state in each month. The research revelations could also assist government to improve its promotion and implementation policies to promote MGNREGA differently in those states facing work demand inconsistencies.

Key words: *MGNREGA, employment, unemployment, poverty, work demand pattern*

INTRODUCTION

Providing employment to the rural people has always been a challenge for any Indian government at central or at state level. Since independence India has been suffering from chronic poverty and unemployment problems, especially in the rural areas. As per Lakdawala methodology for financial year 1999 - 2000, 26.10% population of India (260.25 million people) was considered as below the poverty line. As per Tendulkar methodology for financial year 2011-12, 21.9% population of India (269.78 million people) was considered as below the poverty line. Out of 269.78 million people living below the poverty line (as per Tendulkar method, 2011-12) a staggering 216.7 million people were from rural India (Planning Commission). India has been growing at rapid

pace since the mid-1980s, but despite the growth the government has not been able to curb the chronic poverty problem [16]. Unemployment, in long term, not only elevates poverty but it also creates a tough situation for an individual. Unemployment can increase a person's debt, stress level, dissatisfaction and frustration, which in long term can affect the individual, his family and society at large. In the year 2013; 11,772 farmers committed suicide in India (The Economic Times, 8 July, 2014), major reason for farmers' suicide was quoted as debt and bankruptcy. However, here we are not attempting to establish any conclusion between MGNREGA and farmers' suicide rate. According to an NCAER (2015) report, farmers holding small farms were the major participants in MGNREGA, around 42% of MGNREGA participants owned farms that

contained 1 hectare land or less. In this context MGNREGA can be a wage generating option for such farmers and for those millions of people living in rural areas looking for employment. Every state in India has a different economy, weather pattern, their own welfare schemes, agriculture produce and governance pattern, at the same time these states also differ in terms of unemployment rate, Table 1 gives information about the state wise rural unemployment scenario.

Table 1. Rural Unemployment Rate (per 1000) for persons aged 15 years & above. Numbers in the column besides 'States and Union Territory' is unemployment rate (per 1000)

States and Union Territory	Nos.	States and Union Territory	Nos.
Gujarat	10	Chhattisgarh	38
Karnataka	17	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	40
Telangana	17	Mizoram	42
Maharashtra	24	West Bengal	46
Madhya Pradesh	25	Haryana	51
Andhra Pradesh	26	Odisha	56
Meghalaya	26	Uttar Pradesh	59
Chandigarh	28	Rajasthan	64
Tamil Nadu	30	Assam	67
Bihar	67	Kerala	118
Punjab	67	Tripura	120
Manipur	71	A & N Islands	121
Himachal Pradesh	75	Goa	138
Jharkhand	77	Sikkim	138
Daman and Diu	82	Puducherry	138
Uttarakhand	84	Delhi	142
Nagaland	89	Arunachal Pradesh	150
Jammu and Kashmir	115	Lakshwadeep	238

Source: Labour Bureau Survey, 2013-14 http://labourbureau.nic.in/Report%20%20Vol%201%20final.pdf

As we can see from Table 1, industrial and economically stronger states like Gujarat, Karnataka and Maharashtra had the lowest rural unemployment rates. At the same time economically backward states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha (formerly Orissa) and Assam had higher rural unemployment rates. With objectives to provide rural people with guaranteed employment, to reduce rural to urban migration and to make villages sustainable by creating useful assets, government of India launched MGNREGA in 2006. The major goals of MGNREGA include: a) a fall back employment source for vulnerable rural groups b) providing basic wage security and boosting the inclusive growth c) providing villagers with work in the village or nearby their villages (within 5 Km radius of village). As per MGNREGA guidelines, a worker can demand for work at any given time during a year. The Gram Panchayat (village governing body) plays a vital role in implementing MGNREGA in the village. The village head (Sarpanch) acts as a manager who is responsible for disseminating information to the villagers, accepting the work applications, providing workers with job card, deciding what works to carry out in the village and providing solution to any problems or conflicts. As per MGNREGA guidelines only those who have completed 18 years can participate, moreover, caste wise reservation is also not permitted, these two unique features of MGNREGA makes it a people's act. To the workers benefit, MGNREGA also offers the unemployment allowances. If the workers do not get employment after 15 days of applying for work, they become eligible for unemployment allowance, for which they need to contact the Gram Panchayat. Workers get their wages in their bank account or post office account. Under MGNREGA various types of works are allowed to be carried out, however, it should be noted that in any type of work, workers are not allowed to use machinery. Majority of the permissible works under MGNREGA are targeted toward the betterment of village from the context of connectivity, irrigation, underground water level, cleanliness and agriculture to name a few. Some of the major permissible works as per MGNREGA guidelines are: land development, water conservation and harvesting, irrigation canals, drought proofing, protection walls for flood control, check dams, roads and tree plantation. A United Nation Report (2011) mentioned

about the participatory nature of MGNREGA, the report described a situation in the state of Uttarakhand where workers joined hands for constructing an irrigation canal which was expected to benefit 10 villages and irrigate 4,000 hectares of land. This exemplary project with participation of villagers for the benefits of villages is the best example for those villages not being able to create useful assets through MGNREGA.

In recent years most of the emerging economies have been putting their best efforts to strengthen their unemployment protection policies to protect workers from slipping into informal economy and to safeguard country's human capital [3]. World over only 33.9% of the labour force is covered by mandatory unemployment insurance (International Labour Organization, 2014/15). The International Labour Organization report further states that 80 to 90% of the labour force in North America and Europe was covered by law by an unemployment benefit scheme, only 37.6% of the labour force in Latin America was so protected, 20.6% of the labour force in the Middle East, 16.6% in the Asia and Pacific region and just 8.4% of the labour force in Africa was protected under law. Many developing and developed countries have extended their social security coverage during recent years and have stepped up their efforts to ensure that all in need benefit from at least basic protection. In countries such as Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Mexico, Mozambique, South Africa and Thailand, the social security program's extension has had gradual and significant impact on people's well-being, it also left significant impact on economy, labour market, inclusive growth and employment policies of aforesaid countries (International Labour Organization, 2014/15). In the low income countries, Public Work Programs (PWPs) with focus on the labor force often become costly tools of social protection [13], this is evident from Indian government's allocation of Rs 385 billion for MGNREGA for financial year 2016-17. PWPs can be rapidly rolled out, and that is why PWPs have been used by many countries to protect the poor from the agro climatic or macro-

economic shocks [20]. In Brazil, due to the Bolsa Familia program's conditional cash feature, households' income increased and subsequently it reduced the crime rate [6]. Bangladesh launched Food for Works (FFW) program in 1975, which provided beneficiaries with food for work during the lean patch of the year, the beneficiaries worked for construction and maintenance of rural roads, irrigation channels and river embankments [27]. Administrators during the British Rule in India often implemented public works program to help famine affected people [11].

One of MGNREGA's unique features is no gender and caste based discrimination. Under MGNREGA the family members can work together and this feature draws ample of women to participate in MGNREGA, women's participation across India stood highest at 51% during financial year 2012-13 (http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/).

Women's participation in public work programs has helped them gain more confidence and it has resulted into their increased participation within household. Women's active participation and increased income also played a major role for their children's well-being [2]. In South Africa's Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP) workers can on an average work for four months to over one year in infrastructure sector, this feature of EPWP provided workers with steady income throughout their tenure [27]. The impact of non-MGNREGA income, MGNREGA wages and Public Distribution Systems (PDS) participation on households' food intake revealed that MGNREGA wages had helped the households to consume more protein, calories and micronutrients [14]. The information dissemination of MGNREGA in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajashtan revealed higher level of information amongst villagers [24]. In Uttarakhand's three districts, MGNREGA had helped people generate extra income, but the extent was only 10-20 percent [26].

The effect of rainfall and work demand pattern for four different states of India was analysed and it was found that out of four states, three states had no relationship

between work demand and rainfall, this result revealed that in India millions of people demand for work under MGNREGA irrespective of the season (India mainly has three seasons: winter, summer and monsoon) [15]. MGNREGA had a sizable impact on employment generation [1]. MGNREGA's performance differs from state to state across India, as compared to man days generated by other states in India, Jammu and Kashmir's performance was quite dismal [23], this existing reality of varying work demand has been studied in our research work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To understand and analyse the work demand pattern in details, work demand data (secondary in nature) for four years (2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16) for selected 18 states have been collected from MGNREGA's official website (nrega.nic.in). Out of 29 Indian states, 18 states have been chosen as work demand data for some of the states were not available on the MGNREGA website.
For the analysis part, one factor ANOVA and Correlation have been applied on each state's data. Detailed charts have also been prepared to understand the work demand pattern of each state over the period of four years; charts help us to understand the trend and consistency of the work demand pattern for each state.
Hypothesis:
H0: There are no significant differences between four years' work demand pattern for each state.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results of those six states where four years' work demand pattern is significantly different are shown below in tables and graphs.

Table 2. Assam: ANOVA and Mean Correlation.

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	7.602684	0.000335	2.816466
Mean Correlation for four years	0.477981		

Source: Own calculation based on the data provided by
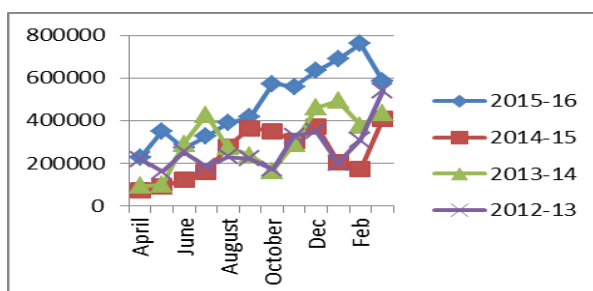
MGNREGA's official website.

Fig.1. Assam: ANOVA and Mean Correlation.
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website

Table 3. Haryana: ANOVA and Correlation.

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0. 9.541626	5.68498E-05	2.816466
Mean Correlation for four years	0.270758		

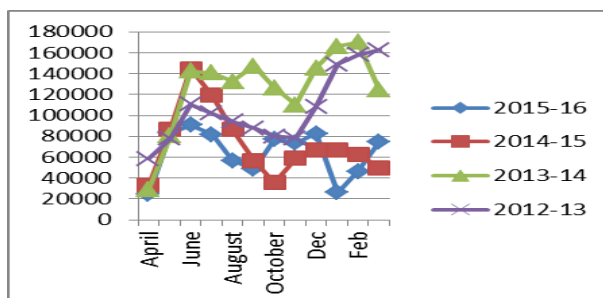Source: Own calculation based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Fig.2. Haryana: ANOVA and Correlation
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Table 4.Punjab: ANOVA and Correlation

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	10.61319	2.26E-05	2.816466
Mean Correlation for four years	0.259906		

Source: Own calculation based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.
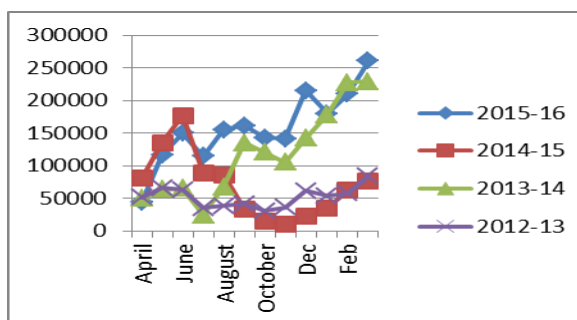

Fig.3. Punjab: ANOVA and Correlation
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Table 5. Tamil Nadu: ANOVA and Correlation

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	4.63197	0.016865	3.284918
Mean Correlation for four years	0.304328		

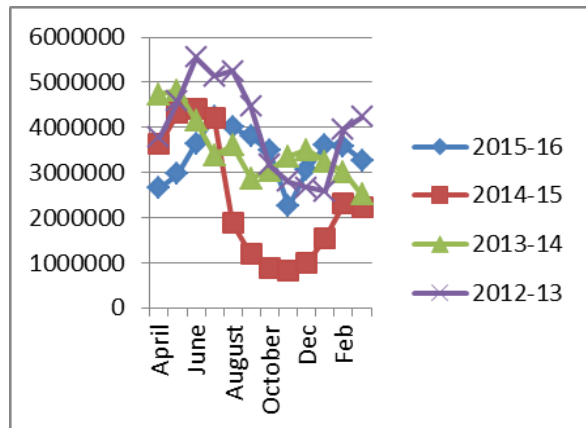Source: Own calculation based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Fig.4.Tamil Nadu: ANOVA and Correlation
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Table 6. Goa: ANOVA and Correlation

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	19.24616	5.98E-10	2.539689
Mean Correlation for four years	-0.03883		

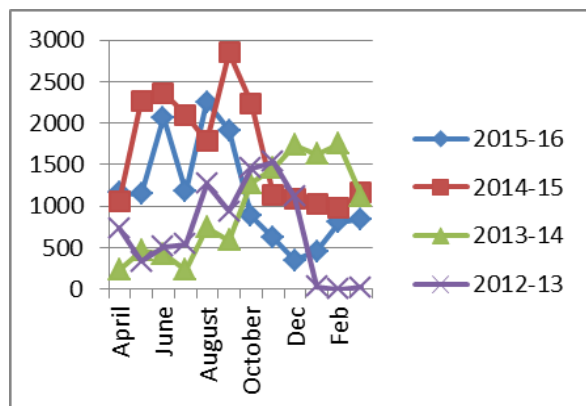Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Fig.5. Goa: ANOVA and Correlation
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

The data analysis revealed that in twelve states the differences between four years' work demand pattern were not significant.

Table 7. Himachal Pradesh: ANOVA and Correlation

Source of Variation	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	3.319028	0.028307	2.816466
Mean Correlation for four years	0.067266		

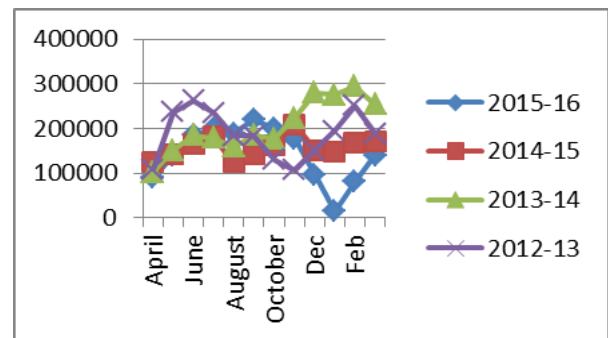Source: Own calculation based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

Fig.6. Himachal Pradesh: ANOVA and Correlation
Source: Own design based on the data provided by MGNREGA's official website.

These twelve states were: Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tripura, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra. For remaining six states differences between four years' demand pattern were significant, these states were: Assam, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh. This result concluded that MGNREGA's demand pattern was not uniform for all the 18 states under study. The variation in work demand can occur due to various factors such as poor or no implementation of MGNREGA by Gram Panchayat, other work opportunities with higher wages, good monsoon, rural to urban migration, launch of new welfare scheme/s. The major learning from the finding is the unique work demand characteristics of all the states. As evident in Fig. 7, MGNREGA work demand was significantly high in the states of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In the states of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Punjab, and Goa the work demand was found not as high as in other states. However, it should also be noted that the work demand had remained relatively similar throughout four years in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Gujarat and Himachal

Pradesh.

There were two reasons behind lower participation in MGNREGA. First reason was that in many states other employment opportunities were available to workers which refrained them from participating in MGNREGA (NCAER – 2015). NSS(66th round) Report from Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India puts Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra as states with higher employment rate in rural India. The second reason was the poor implementation of MGNREGA. Economically stronger Indian states such as Punjab, Gujarat, and Maharashtra might be able to provide people with better and higher market wages, which in turn would lower MGNREGA demand (NCAER – 2015). Economically backward states such as Bihar and Odisha see lower participation in MGNREGA mostly because of poor implementation at the grass root level. MGNREGA's success also depends on an interested and active Gram Panchayat. Small state like Tripura could be the torch bearer for other states where MGNREGA performance had been poor. Tripura provided work for 94.46 person days per household in fiscal 2015-16. (The Financial Express, 27 April, 2016)

In states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Gujarat the participation of women was quite high, for Kerala it was 87.03%, for Tamil Nadu it was 79.74%, for Tripura it was 47.42% and for Gujarat it was 44.55% (mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega). In the states of Bihar and Gujarat, MGNREGA's success was determined by interaction among local village bodies and political representatives. Employment outcomes were found to be very good in the villages where agricultural labourers had close contacts and rapport with the Sarpanch.

In many villages the villagers preferred MGNREGA works when it did not clash with their farm work, however, the wealthier farmers opposed MGNREGA as many of the labourers opted for MGNREGA works leaving them with few farm labourers.
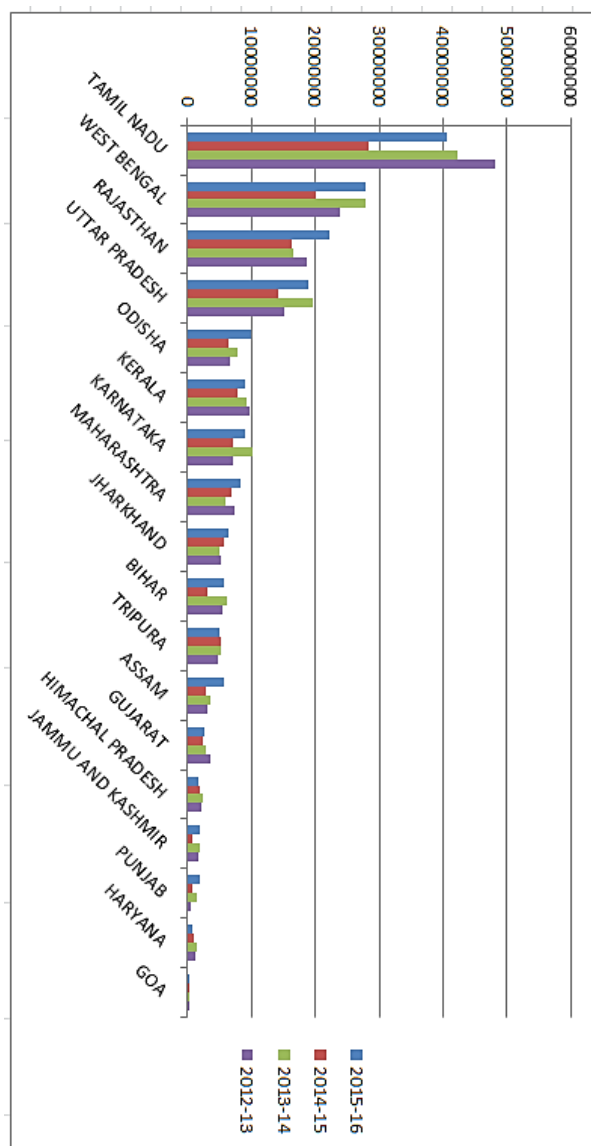

Fig. 7. Work demanded by no of person in all the 18 states for four years (Source: Compiled by authors)

In West Bengal political competition within the village made way to higher MGNREGA expenditure (ESID Briefing no. 1, 2013). For poorer states the existing management structure of MGNREGA was not efficient enough for a successful implementation and therefore, a holistic approach including community participation and decision making should be made mandatory for creating durable assets [7]. Lower participation in economically backward states such as Bihar and Odisha and higher participation in states such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra suggested that state level policies and priorities had a big impact on work demand pattern [9]. Further in the discussion, we will talk about MGNREGA's performance in four

Indian zones and discuss important points.

West Zone

In the year 2015-16, 22.10 million people worked in Rajasthan, 2.72 million people worked in Gujarat and 8.2 million people worked in Maharashtra. (http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx) In was observed that income, social participation, level of aspiration and level of awareness were found to be medium in Maharashtra, among majority of MGNREGA beneficiaries [8]. In Maharashtra the program was a success in terms of asset creation, watershed development, prevention of drought, large scale administration of rural public works and reduction in large scale migration which could be the reason for no significant difference in the past four years' of work demand pattern in an elephantine state [22]. Despite huge number of people willing to be a part of MGNREGA program in Rajasthan, there were issues of biases by Sarpanch, non-allotment of work even upon demand and political interference as reported in ESID briefing No.1. MGNREGA workers were mostly from the backward class and most of them earned their employment through dairy, farming and construction activities and hence the participation rate was lower in Gujarat [15].

East Zone

In the year 2015-16, 27 million people worked in West Bengal, 9.9 million people worked in Odisha, 5 million people worked in Tripura, 5.7 million people worked in Assam, 6.4 million people worked in Jharkhand and 5.7 million people worked in Bihar in MGNREGA program. (http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx) Low awareness created a problem to make MGNREGA demand driven in case of Odisha, further it was also observed that people neither knew about works/projects which were covered under MGNREGA nor did they know as to how they can demand for a work [18]. As suggested in ESID Briefing No.1, in Bihar it was seen that labourers and marginal farmers preferred MGNREGA provided the work was not clashing with their farm work. Fig. 7 suggests that trend of work demand though over the months for the last four years have been almost the same, there hasn't been a high work demand, despite Bihar being third largest state of India population wise. In case of West Bengal, no irregularities were found in Gram Panchayat's functioning; people actually demanded more MGNREGA jobs as other alternative jobs were not available. It was noted that MGNREGA had helped villagers with better purchasing power and with increase in income they were able to send their children to school, which could be the reason for work demand pattern remaining almost same for the past four years, in fact towards increasing side [10]. Successful implementation in the state of West Bengal was noticed by the Government of India and it decided to showcase the state as a model state. As cited in an article 'NREGA Implementation Ranking 2015-16' by Mathur and Bolia in 2016, Tripura was ranked on the top on various parameters like providing 95 days of employment on and average, higher percentage of wages paid and higher work completion rate. These factors may contribute to higher stability in work demand pattern in the past four years as seen in the chart. However, Assam did face problems such as poor implementation, corruption, lack of awareness and poor quality of assets. Assam failed to provide 100 days of employment due to the entry of unscrupulous contractors who would take the most part of benefits and reduce the number of days of employment. [4] Corruption was a major issue and so was implementation in the state of Assam [12].

North Zone

In the year 2015-16, 18 million people worked in Uttar Pradesh, 1.73 million people worked in Himachal Pradesh, 1.85 million people worked in Jammu & Kashmir, 0.76 million people worked in Haryana and 1.89 million people worked in Punjab in MGNREGA program. (http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx) In the state of Punjab, rural connectivity, water conservation and water harvesting, drought proofing and cleaning of village ponds were the major employment activities under MGNREGA. It had a significant impact on the economic condition of workers by

providing them work opportunities, regular income and economic independence especially in the case of women workers, which could be the reason for gradual increment in work demand in Punjab. [25] Irregular fluctuations in movement of monthly wage rates in smaller states like Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir could be an important issue in MNREGA implementation [28]. While average accruals per household had been quite high in Haryana, the major problem was that only 2.8% of the household were covered [17]. Despite offering very low wages in Uttar Pradesh, work demand was high compared to other states [21].

South Zone

In the year 2015-16, 40 million people worked in Tamil Nadu, 9.1 million people worked in Kerala, 8.9 million people worked in Karnataka and 0.01 million people worked in Goa in MGNREGA program. (http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx) University of Sussex's Global Insight (2013) survey in two villages in Tamil Nadu revealed that the average number of person days had increased steadily. Between 2008-09 and 2012-13, the total number of households increased from 3.3 million to 7 million. Further the survey noted that majority of the MGNREGA workers were drawn from those households which depended upon agricultural works as their main source of income. In the state of Tamil Nadu majority of the workers were dalits (backward class) and women [5]. From the total participants in MGNREGA in Tamil Nadu, women's share was as high as 85%(http://www.nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx). The main beneficiaries of the scheme were thus women, dalits and villagers with little education or assets. The success of Tamil Nadu could be due to skyrocketed annual expenditure, increase in total number of person-days and number of households who benefitted due to the program [5]. Specific measures were put in place in the state to curb corruption. There was a high participation of women which led to success of MGNREGA, there was difference in work demand pattern observed over the years [6]. In the state of Kerala, Panchyats were actively engaged in ensuring that MGNREGA program was implemented effectively. While rich states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala provided employment opportunities under MGNREGA, particularly in the state of Kerala, Panchayat played a very critical role by actively engaging in the development oriented work unwillingness of women to participate, inflexible timing and undue delay in payment were the areas where improvement was required [29]. In case of Karnataka, gender, education and family size of the workers influenced worker's employment under MGNREGA program. In rural areas, the program was complementing rural wage incomes of needy at no cost to agriculture and other sectors. The economic scarcity of labour in agriculture was majorly due to hike in wages in Mining and Construction sector [19].

CONCLUSIONS

The results of Anova and Correlation suggested that six states' work demand pattern was significantly different. These states are located in North, East and South of India, whereas in West Indian states work demand pattern is not observed significantly different. Three states of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Rajasthan were found with highest number of persons demanding work under MGNREGA respectively. The varying nature of work demand is evident in the Figure No.7. Future research, with a grass root level opinion of beneficiaries of MGNREGA in all Indian states can lead us to know the on-ground situation of work demand as well as factors affecting work demand in every state.

Looking at the data analysis part and the observations mentioned in discussion, it could be commented that every state has a unique work demand pattern, some states have high percentage of women participation, some states have implementation problem, some states have poorly developed government structure, wherein some states offer other high wage opportunities that attract workers. The outcome of the research opens the door for customized MGNREGA implementation for each state as all the 18 states under study

showcase a different work demand pattern.

A lot of work can be done to analyse and understand the work demand pattern across India using various models and data collection strategies. The entire research work has been carried out using secondary data; primary data collection could add several more factors which could enhance understanding on why work demand pattern varies from state to state and even within the state as well. Since data for only four years were available on MGNREGA official website, this research paper takes into consideration the work demand data of 18 Indian states for the years: 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16.

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