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Short Communication

Assessment of access of the public utilities amongst the villages surveyed under Unnath Bharath Abhiyan mission in the Manachanallur taluk of Trichy district in Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the study was to identify the deficits in the access and utilization of the common public utilities in the villages under Unnath Bharath mission (UBA), India. The initiatives that require some attention and could help improvise the current existing livelihoods in the Indian villages. Descriptive cross-sectional study-cross sectional survey analysis under the five following villages Kovathakudi, Ootathur, Thirumanamedu (west), Thirumanamedu (East) and Thirumangalam of the Manachanallur taluk, Tiruchirapalli district in Tamilnadu that were selected for the UBA study using semi-structured semi-tested questionnaire by doing the door to door survey. In 94% of the surveyed study participants, did not receive any form of pension. 126 (22.7%) study participants of the villages surveyed under the UBA had Mahatma Gandhi national rural employment guarantee act (MGNREGA) job cards. Nearly 590 (51.75%) individuals had some knowledge with regard to the usage of computers. Around 504 (94%) individuals had knowledge regarding self help groups (SHG). Need for attention for initiatives to further improvise the pension scheme, MGNREGA cards, SHG and computer literacy amongst the surveyed population under the Unnath Bharath mission.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Old age pension, SHG, UBA

INTRODUCTION

To participate in conceptualizing and preparation of community level development plans along with the rural development schemes and the Panchayat Raj institutions, the higher education institutions at their respective districts are expected to carry out the detailed field study with regards to the UBA. This will help in improving the quality of day- to- day livelihood, energy security, environment and basic living amenities. Hence, the backward gram panchayats and villages under the same in their corresponding sectors under the UBA scheme were selected to improvise their knowledge and expertise in building a substantial infrastructure for the development and upbringing of the rural community.[1,2] The UBA through its mission through various higher institutions had already achieved and helped in the implementation of projects like solid waste management, health awareness program, developing mobile phone apps, water purification for schools, waste water management, biogas plants, rain water harvesting and encouraging menstrual hygiene program.[1]

In this study we have considered a part of our survey indicators in conjunction with the access to public utilities on its own. The following access to public utilities like the possession of bank account, computer literacy, social security schemes (Old age pension (OAP), disability

pension, and widow pension), MGNREGA job cards and SHG appraisal.[3]

The OAP under the leadership of Indian government the "Indira Gandhi national OAP scheme (IGNOAPS)" is one of the five sub-schemes of the national social assistance programme (NSAP). Under the IGNOAPS, citizens living below poverty line (BPL) and 60 years or above in age are eligible to apply. A monthly pension of ₹ 200 up to 79 years and ₹ 500 thereafter. As per the revised eligibility criteria, new beneficiaries will be identified from the BPL list prepared by the States/UTs as per guidelines issued by the ministry of rural development (MORD)-BPL census 2002.[4]

The possession of the bank account is one of the recent indicators as per the multi dimensional poverty index and forms a vehicle for transferring incentives and assisting the computer based bank transfer through the health portals. The provision of bank account improves the health care status, education and standard of living as per the National multi dimensional poverty index review 2023.[5]

The use of mobile phones that includes the computer literacy had paved the ways for the Digital health. The idea of mHealth through the WHO initiative had shown to improve the access to health information, quality and coverage of healthcare services. It boosts the positive changes in health behaviors to prevent the onset of acute and chronic diseases as a part of behaviour change communication. In fact the UBA had helped the establishment of computer centres in the schools of rural area to improve their computer literacy skills.[6]

The MGNREGA established in 2005 is one of the financial inclusive progamme for the rural poorer households under the Indian government. It benefits the poorer society with seasonal employment in various tasks like paddy cultivation, plantation, pond cultivation, fish ponds, farming ponds, tree plantation, irrigation well repair, canal construction works and crop expansion activities.[7]

The Kudumbashree program started in 1998, Kerala and the Magalir Urimai Thogai programme started in 2023, Tamil Nadu including the Stree Sakthi yojana are the good examples of women empowerment, entrepreneurship and SHG.[8]

Hence, we chose the above-mentioned indicators under the public utilities of the Unnath Bharaath mission in our survey.

Aim and objectives

The aim of the UBA is to connect institutions of higher education with local communities to address the developmental challenges through appropriate technologies. To assess the access of public health utilities that was specified under the UBA mission portal.[1]

METHODS

Study type

Descriptive cross sectional study-cross sectional survey analysis.

Duration of study

Study conducted for one month (1st week, February 2022).

Inclusion criteria

All the study participants between 18 to 75 years residing for more than 6 months in the present residential address in both the above and the BPL (viz consumer price index and multi dimensional poverty index).[9]

Exclusion criteria

Those below 18 years of age, those residing less than 6 months of period (including immigrant and emigrant population) were not considered for the study.

Study population

All the age groups under the five following villages-Kovathakudi, Ootathur, Thirumanamedu (West), Thirumanamedu (East) and Thirumangalam of the Manachanallur taluk, Tiruchirapalli district in Tamilnadu were selected for the UBA study.

Method of data collection

After informed consent, using simple random sampling; every alternative household was surveyed by doing a door-to-door survey using pre-validated, semi-tested and semi-structured questionnaire was used via mobile phones (Epi-collect software)[10] until the survey sample size reached 706 participants, out of the total population of 15,492 across the five villages.

Statistical analysis

The formal training of students for data entry and sharing using Epi-collect software in the mobile phone was done in the preliminary round.[10] Subsequently, the data cleaning and reduction were done using MS excel software and finally for the data analysis SPSS v 21.0 was also used.

RESULTS

In about 94% of the surveyed study participants, did not receive any form of pension. The OAP was observed in only 3% individuals, 0.17% received disability pension

and 0.8% received widow pension (Figure 1). Nearly 126 (22.7%) study participants of the villages surveyed under the UBA had MGNREGA job cards and 428 (77.3%) did not have the same (Table 1).

Around 655 (88.5%) individuals were bank account holders; whereas 85 (11.5%) individuals were found to be not having any form of bank account of the surveyed population. In this survey we found that 590 (51.75%) individuals had some knowledge with regard to the usage of computers; whereas 550 (48.25%) individuals were not aware of the same. There were 504 (94%) individuals who had knowledge regarding SHG and utilizing its services; whereas 32 did not have any access to SHG.

Table 1: The distribution of various public utilities in the five villages surveyed under Unnath Bharath mission.

Public utilities		Kovatha-kudi	Ootathur	Thiru-manamedu (East)	Thiru-manamedu (west)	Thiru-mangalam	Total
Bank A/C	Yes	161	229	35	53	177	655
	No	13	21	13	13	25	85
Computer literate	Yes	156	210	29	39	157	591
	No	134	184	37	39	156	550
Social security	Disability pension	0	1	0	0	0	1
	No pension	139	189	39	50	145	562
	OAP	4	5	1	4	4	18
	Other pension	3	2	1	1	5	12
	Widow pension	0	0	0	1	3	4
MNREGA job card	Yes	41	37	9	3	36	126
	No	100	147	27	41	113	428
Self-help groups	Yes	125	170	30	40	139	504
	No	10	5	6	5	6	32

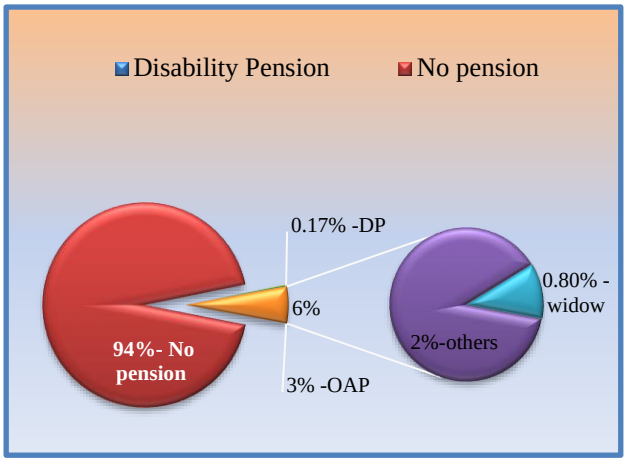

Figure 1: Distribution of various pension utilities availed in the villages surveyed.

DISCUSSION

In about 94% of our surveyed study participants, did not receive any form of pension. The OAP; was observed in only 3% individuals, 0.17% received disability pension and 0.8% received widow pension. The 655 (88.5%) individuals were bank account holders; whereas 85 (11.5%) individuals were found to be not having any form of bank account in the present survey.

According to a mixed study done in urban Puducherry by Jothi et al nearly 80% of participants availed pension directly from their banks with 98% satisfaction with the overall scheme, half of them were dissatisfied with the pension amount. Around 42% received pension for the last 5-10 years and about 27% received the same during the last five years. The Puducherry pension scheme seems to be robust and more attractive than our present survey and it also reveals the possession of bank accounts for the same.[11]

MGNREGA 126 (22.7%) job cards and 428 (77.3%) did not have the same. In a comparative analysis done by K Rengasami and B Sasikumar more than 50 percent coverage were seen in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh with more or less equal poverty rates; and 30 percent coverage in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand with very high levels of poverty which is in comparison to our study.[12]

In our survey nearly 590 (51.75%) individuals had some knowledge with regard to the usage of computers; whereas 550 (48.25%) individuals were not aware of the same.

In a study done in urban and rural Telengana by Sunil Patel et al the overall digital health literacy (DHL) was 20.4% of the study participants with a similar proportion between rural and urban areas of 20.1% and urban-20.8% correspondingly. The components considered for the DHL were use of computers in the last one month, higher education and the use of mobile phones-android apps. This study is quite supportive of our present survey in

understanding the DHL in the recent developments as per the Unnath Bharath mission.[13]

Our study revealed nearly 504 (94%) individuals who had knowledge regarding SHG and utilizing its services; whereas 32 did not have any access to SHG. In a community based household survey in Bihar revealed improvement of antenatal, delivery, postnatal and nutritional indicators. Despite the knowledge about SHG the use of SHG schemes could improve the situation of many poorer households especially in Low middle income countries.[14]

CONCLUSION

There was definitely poor access towards OAP, disability and widow pension schemes, in the vast majority the surveyed individuals did not avail any form of pension schemes. The MNREGA job cards were not utilized by majority of the individuals during seasons. There was definitely a deficit in the above-mentioned areas that needs attention, encouragement and continuous supervision.

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