Mgnregs and Rural Unemployment- A Case Study of Chanditala C.D Block- I of Hugli District, West Bengal

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---**ABSTRACT**---
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act enshrines the legal right of one hundred days of paid employment to any household, on demand. Though its scope is national, there have been wide interstate as well as inter district variation in the achievement of the objectives of the act. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) enacted by legislation on August 25, 2005 and it was renamed as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on 2nd October 2009. The act aims eradication of extreme poverty and at making villages self sustaining through productive assets creation. In this paper an attempt has been made to identify the pattern of rural unemployment in Chanditala-I C.D block of Hugli district, West Bengal as well as to ascertain the causes of unemployment and the effects also. Emphasis also given on the status of employment generation in the area through Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

KEY WORDS: *Persondays Generation, Women Work Participation Rate, 100 Days Programme, Job Cards, Rural Unemployment, Disguised Unemployment*

Date of Submission: 12 April 2014   Date of Publication: 30 April 2014

I.   INTRODUCTION:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act or NREGA is one of the distinctive employment generating programmes of the Government of India to improve the lives of poor people through enhancing livelihood security and to reduce the levels of rural poverty as a whole. The act came into effect on February 2, 2006 and was implemented in three phases. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an Indian job guarantee scheme enacted by legislation on 25 th August, 2005. The scheme provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum age. This act was introduced in Hugli district of West Bengal on 2nd April, 2007 with an aim of improving the purchasing power of the rural people, primarily semi or unskilled work to people living rural areas whether or not they are below the stipulated work force is women. The law was initially called National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) but was renamed on 2nd October, 2009. The act aims at eradication of poverty and at making villages self sustaining through productive asset creation. The government has referred to it as an **"Act of the people, by the people and for the people"**

A number of studies have come up with mixed observations on the evaluation of MGNREGS – a majority of those have highlighted the poor implementation of the programme curtailing down poor people's benefits from the programme. Some of those arguments are on wages not being paid in due time, inflated muster rolls with nonexistent workers, lack of executing authorities at local level, lack of social adult and projecting some success stories as case for the whole country. This paper focus on the impact of MGNREGS on the livelihood generation and the hindrances it faces on the way to reach and to benefit the poor in a rural block of Hugli district of West Bengal. This paper is based on in-depth empirical research using both quantitative and qualitative methods done in Chanditala – I block. The specific objective of the paper is to investigate the problems in the system on the issuew of timely generation of employment, payment of wages, payment of unemployment allowance, tabulation of muster roll etc. This paper also deals with the unemployment problem of the area highlighting the causes and mitigation policies. The study found that poor people even in extremely remotest region having very limited options do not perceive this programme as a viable option for employment and provision of livelihood. Unemployment is also a major problem in the area and youth unemployment problems prevails there.

Independent India has a long history of employment programme especially meant for poor and for rural areas. Since the First Plan Period, a series of wage employment programmes developed such as Rural Works Programme(RWP), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment(CSRE), Pilot Rural Employment Project(PIPEP), National Rural Employment Programme(NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme(RLEGP), Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojona(SGRY), Jawahar Rozgar Yojona(JRY).
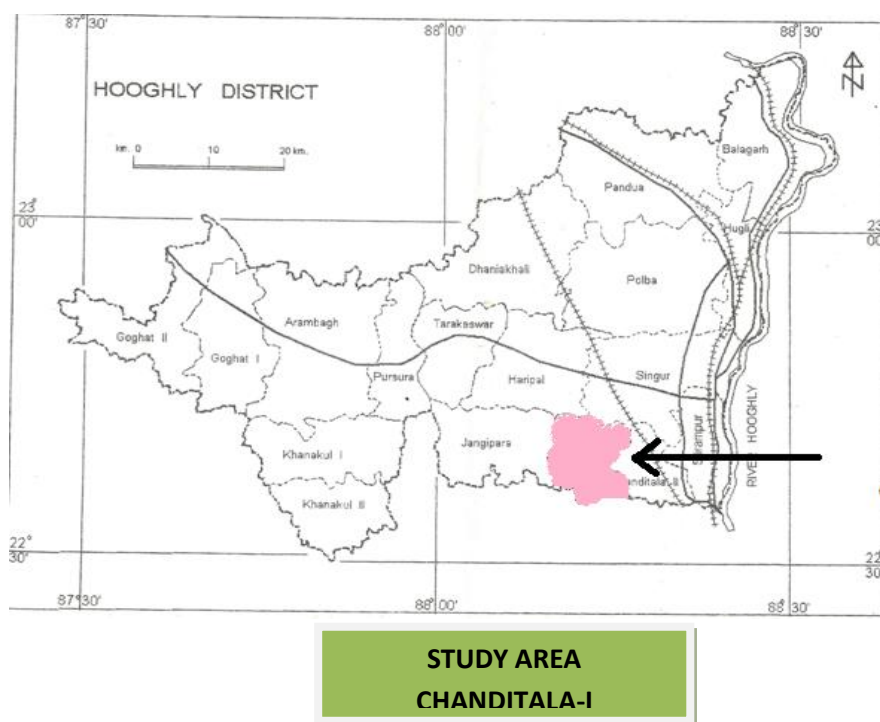
Using the prior experiences gathered from running different wage employment programmes in the country, Government of India decided to introduce a new employment guarantee scheme in 2006 under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(NREGA) which is presently known as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme(MGNREGS). In preparing this programme the Government of India kept in view all the drawbacks in previous employment programmes.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 was passed universally in Lok Sabha on 23 rd August, 2005 and was implemented by the Ministry Of Rural development. The programme was started on 2nd February, 2006 for implementation in 200 backward districts of the country in phase-I. It was implemented in 130 other districts in 2007-08 in phase- II.

The Act was notified in remaining 285 rural districts of India from April 1, 2008 in phase- III. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is the first unparallel law internationally, that guarantees wage employment to the rural people. The intention of the act is to enhance the livelihood security in the rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of wage employment within a financial year to every household whose adults are willing to do unskilled manual work.

II. STUDY AREA:

The study area covers the Chanditala – I C.D block of Serampur sub division of Hugli district of West Bengal. India. The area is located in the southern part of West Bengal. Its latitudinal extension is 22° 39' 32" N- 22° 01' 20" N and longitudinal extension is 87°30' 15" E - 88° 30' 20" E. The study area is bounded on the north by parts of Haripal and Singur C.D block. Jangipara and Chanditala – II C.D block is located in the eastern portion and in the southern portion Haora district is situated. The total area of c is   Sq. Km. It Has 9 Gram Panchayet and 56 villages. According to 2011 Census total population of Chanditala – I C.D block is 179825 with male population of 90032 and female population of 89793 so the male female ratio is 51: 49.Out of the 45 villages under nine different Gram Panchayets five are selected on the basis of location ie. North, south, east, west and central and the villages are Masat in the north, Kumirmore in the south, Ainya in the west, Krishnarampur in the east and nawabpur in the central location.

STUDY AREA
CHANDITALA-I

OBJECTIVES: The main objectives of the paper are as follows-

1. To identify the pattern of rural unemployment in Chanditala C.D Block-I
2. To ascertain the main causes of unemployment.
3. To depict the effects of unemployment in socio-economic life of the people.
4. To explore the status of employment generation in the area through MGNREGS.
5. To find out the overall impact of MGNREGS on the lives of rural people.
6. To understand people's view on the effectiveness of the programme as a viable livelihood alternative for the poor.

III.   METHODOLOGY:

Methodology is the way of achieving the goal through the drawing of inference by observation, collection and differential analysis of relevant data relating to the study of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and rural unemployment with special reference to Chanditala-I C.D Block of Hugli district of West Bengal. The statistical data for the study has been mobilized both from the primary and secondary sources. Primary data has been collected from the study area through a well designed questionnaire and the necessary secondary data has been collected from different government and non government agencies, different reports published by Panchayet and Rural Development Department (Government of West Bengal), official website of NREGA and official website of Hugli district. Collected data was tabulated and analyzed based on different cartograms and quantitative techniques which are followed by interpretation.

PRESENT STATUS OF MGNREGS IN HUGLI DISTRICT:

In Hugli district, 456121number of households have been provided with employment and a total of 170.70 lakh person days have been generated under MGNREGS. Employment in person days generated for different categories of population such as S.C, S.T and others are 50%, 10% and 40% respectively.

Table: 1 Present Status of MGNREGS in Hugli District (2012-13)

HOOGHLY District MGNREGS Profile

TABLE- 1

	2009-10	2010-11
Total Fund Availability	Rs. 8846.56597 Lakh (Including O.B.)	Rs. 18464.11209 Lakh (Including O.B.)
Total Expenditure	Rs. 8237.17080 Lakh.	Rs. 16939.02527 Lakh.
Total Expenditure (in MIS)	Rs. 7934.47254 Lakh.	Rs. 16862.84851 Lakh.
Avg. Expenditure Per G.P	Rs. 39.79 Lakh.	Rs. 81.83 Lakh.
Total Household Provided Employment	19,6779 Nos.	3,87,399 Nos.
Total Numbers of Job Cards	54,0731 Nos.	5,82,638 Nos.
Total Man days	5,90,9956 days.	1,09,26,884 days
Woman's Participation	31.45 %	34.02 %
Avg. Job provided to Household	30.03 days	27.86 days
100 Day's completed household	3400 Nos	8486 Nos
Completed Works	5364 nos	7518 nos
% of overall MIS entry (in MIS)	89.69	98.58

Source**:** http:/nrega.nic.in.

Present Status of MGNREGA in CHANDITALA – I C.D BLOCK

Persondays generation is a good indicator of evaluating the performance of MGNREGS. Chanditala –I is basically a rural area having total population of 179825 Total male population is 90032 and female population is 89793.Total rural population is 104677 and urban population is 75148. Total number of registered household in MGNREGS in 2013-14 was 21604.707households lived below poverty line. Total number of workers registered their name in MGNREGA was 41896. Though the area is a rural bur the process of urbanization started slowly so the people of this area are slowly change their occupation from primary to secondary and tertiary sector. 5 villages are selected on the basis of direction centering Masat.

In 2011-12 cumulative persondays generation in Aiya gram panchayet was 22052which was roughly doubled in the next year to 40198 among SC population. But in case of ST population number of persondays generation was not high as other categories. In 2011-12 it was only 812 and in 2012-13 it raised just to 1077. In case of other population category in 2011-12 persondays generated was 17135 which was raised to 37685 in 2012-13. It is satisfactory in case of women as concern. The picture is quite embarrassing in Krishnarampur gram panchayet among SC and ST population. But surprisingly krishnarampur gram panchayet has in better position from Aiya in respect to women's persons days generation as concerned. In Kumirmore and Masat situation is quite similar with krishnarampur. Point to be mentioned that Masat has not generated much person days for women with compare to other selected gram panchayet of the block.

TABLE:2

Namae of the villages	CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD ISSUED JOB CARDS								
	SC			ST			OTHERS		
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
AIYA	956	981	981	39	39	39	1917	1990	1990
KRISHNARAMPUR	426	476	476	0	0	0	1448	1499	1499
KUMIRMORE	599	603	603	3	3	3	800	885	885
MASAT	929	931	931	1	1	1	1873	1976	1989
NABABAPUR	390	399	399	0	0	0	1231	1273	1275

From the above table it is clearly observed that In case of job card issue as concern aiya and Masat have maintained a balanced rate but Krishnarampur and Kumirmore have issued job card to the householders at a moderate rate whereas situation is worse in Nababpur among all categories.

TABLE: 3

Namae of the villages	2011-12			2012-13			2013-14		
	DEMAND	PROVIDED	GAP	DEMAND	PROVIDED	GAP	DEMAND	PROVIDED	GAP
AIYA	1431	1431	0	1619	1619		182	0	-182
KRISHNARAMPUR	1082	1082	0	1274	1274		128	0	-128
KUMIRMORE	738	737	-1	897	897	0	58	0	-58
MASAT	1567	1564	-3	1721	1716	-5	1593	1470	-123
NABABAPUR	903	903	0	848	848	0	505	411	-94

From Table 3 In 2011-12 and 2012-13 all the selected gram panchayet, employment demand and employment provided both are nearly equal so employment gap was nearly zero. But in 2013-14 there was a huge employment gap in Aiya, moderate gap in Krishnarampurand Masat whereas Kumirmore and nababpur tahe gap was 58 and 94 respectively.

NATURE OF RURAL UNEMPLOYMENT- A CASE STUDY OF CHANDITALA –I C.D BLOCK

Primary survey has done on the basis of a questionnaire schedule over the selected 5 villages in Chanditala-I C.D block of Serampur subdivision of Hugli district, West Bengal in 2013 for the assessment of unemployment situation. 84 percent of male and 16 percent of female population have been surveyed in different categories. Among them 58 percent are general, 22 percent are SC and remaining 20 percent are OBC category (Figure-1). All of them are spoken in Bengali language; few of them (22 percent) can speak in Hindi whereas only 6 percent people can able to speak in English. By religion 80 percent are Hindu and 20 percent are Muslims.(Figure-2) 6 percent people found illiterate, 2 percent can able to sign only their name, 28 percent got primary education, 28 percent also got secondary education. Only 6 percent has taken up to higher secondary level and 20 percent complete the graduation level. (Figure-3).Monthly income of the families of the surveyed people is not so high. 68 percent family earned less than 5000 rupees per month and remaining 42 percent people earned more than 5000 rupees per month. (Figure-4)

As current weekly status method have used to depict the real picture it is found that 38 percent people engaged in any kind of work during last week but 62 percent people are purely unemployed as they were not engaged any kind of work still now. Those persons who were found unemployed in the current week have several reasons to quit their job like low wage, lack of security etc. Most of the persons wanted to get any kind of job (94 percent), only 6 percent wanted to fixed on their earlier job. They have adopted different strategy for getting the job like wrote letter, applied in persons, friends and relatives, registered their name in Government employment exchange. Some persons tried to starts their own business.(Figure-5)

26 percent of population remains unemployed during last six months, 24 percent persons remains unemployed during last one year, 16 percent persons remains unemployed during last two years and surprisingly 34 percent of the surveyed people remained unemployed during more than last two years. (Figure-6) The reasons behind their unsuccessfulness of their unemployed condition or the question arise here that why were they became unemployed? The fact which came out from the primary survey that 26 percent persons believe that due to scarcity of job in the area they are unable to find any job, 16 percent persons said that there are jobs but they did not have enough information about the available jobs, 30 percent persons said that they did not have the right skill to get any job whereas 14 percent persons said that due to lack of enough education they could not find any job still now. Rest of the people believes that low wage is the main factor behind unemployment of the many persons. (Figure-7)Primary survey tells that the expected lowest monthly income ranges between 2000 to 10000 rupees.

56 percent of people wanted to get job within small distance as they could travel in less time and 44 percent said that distance does not matter.

One surprising fact came out from the primary survey in the context of unemployment as concern is that only 30 percent of people have registered their name in the Government employment exchange. Another feature which indirectly related with this context that only 8 percent people have taken training from any institution to developed their abilities. Same picture came out in terms of extracurricular activities like computer knowledge, driving, and spoken English power etc by which they could enhanced their personal ability to get a job early. Though the area is belongs to rural area but 52 percent people have computer knowledge which is a basic criteria now-a-days.

Unemployment is a burning problem in the society but people have some choice in job preference. Primary survey showed variety of jobs where people have tried to engaged like Government service, private job, business, jewellary making, electrical work, driving, software professional, photography, manual work etc. But most of them (52 percent) have no choice as they wanted to engage in any kind of work. (Figure-8)

In this context of unemployment the question emerges that is how the unemployed persons have spent their time. Through analysis of the primary data the facts reveals that 16 percent people spend their time in searching job which is a good indication, 20 percent people spend time in the preparation of competitive examination. Rest of the people spend their time in many activities like watching television, listening music, reading books, household works, playing indoor and outdoor games etc.

One item which is directly related with present unemployed youth that is use of mobile phone. Primary survey reveals that 88 percent persons used mobile phone. 86 percent persons have spent 500 to 1000 rupees whereas only 4 percent have spent more than 1000 rupees per month for their personal expenditure. Despite the several efforts and planning taken by the state and central government it is surprising that nobody get unemployed allowance yet.

Among the different types of unemployment, primary survey reveals that 34 percent persons are open unemployed, 34 percent are educated unemployed, 10 percent are structurally unemployed and 4 percent falls in other category. (Figure-9)

Educated unemployment rate is maximum because present education system does not produce such level of skills by which a person can make himself fit with any type of job. Wrong education system is responsible for that. Lack of technical education, training course programme, unwillingness of join in other format of jobs, lack of government initiatives leads the scenario more complex. In an economy where people tried to engage any work but unable to find any job is known as open unemployment. In the surveyed villages open unemployment rate was also high(34 percent)Through the analysis of the primary data it is found that main causes of unemployment are inadequate work, low economic development, wrong education system, rapid population growth, improper employment planning, unscientific agriculture etc.(Figure-10)

From the analysis of the pattern of rural unemployment in Chanditala- I C.D block some suggestive measure could be recommended to overcome the problem of rural unemployment and improve the situation are as follows-

➤ Enhancement of work opportunities.

➤ Implementation of free education system in primary and secondary level.

➤ Controls of population growth.

➤ Proper implementation of 100 days programme in rural areas.

➤ More work should under MGNREGS.

➤ Change in traditional education system.

➤ Implementation of technical education.

➤ Rural industrialization mainly set up the agro based industries.

➤ Government initiatives.

➤ Rural works programmes, for Marginal farmers and agricultural labourers.

FINDINGS:

Major findings of the analysis are as follows-

1. Rural unemployment situation gradually improves due to the implementation of MGNREGS.
2. Nature of rural unemployment is changing in nature.
3. Rural unemployment shifted from traditional seasonal and disguised unemployment to modern open and educated unemployment.
4. Rural unemployment rate is more pronounced among male than female.
5. Work participation rate is lower among male than female.
6. Females are engaged mostly in household works which is not productive.
7. Rural unemployment rate is gradually changing in nature.
8. Wrong education system and inadequate work are the main reasons behind the backdrop of rural unemployment.
9. Due to unscientific agriculture many people's remained unemployed throughout or most of the time in the year.
10. Many agricultural lands turned into settlement.
11. Difference of unemployment rate gradually reduced between rural and urban area.
12. Changing land use pattern slightly affected the enhancement of job opportunity.
13. Rural youth unemployment rate increased day by day.
14. Political disturbances in rural area make the situation more uncomfortable.
15. The incidence of unemployment among the educated is much higher than the overall unemployment.
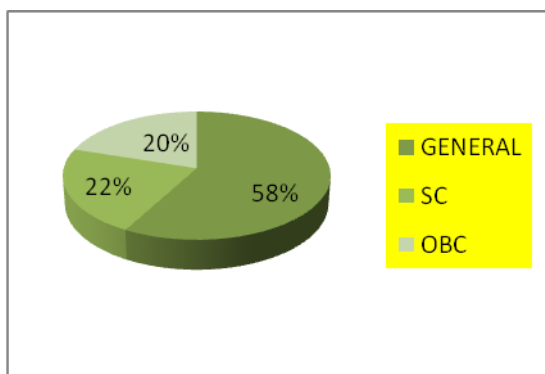16. There is greater unemployment in agricultural sector than in industrial and other major sectors.
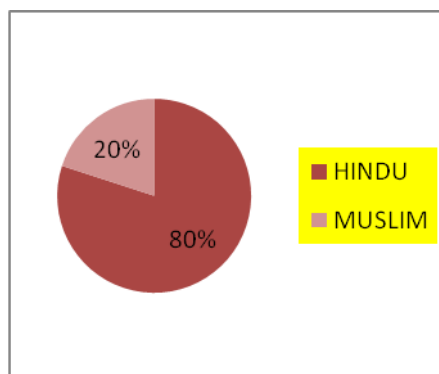

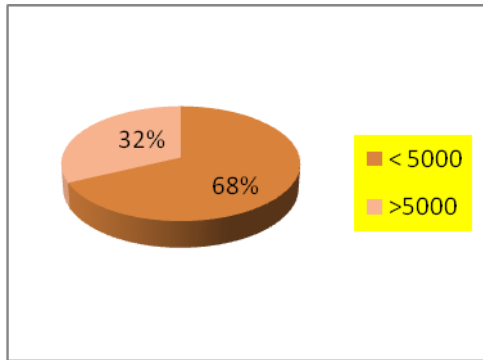**Figure-1   CASTE COMPOSITION**

Figure-2 RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE
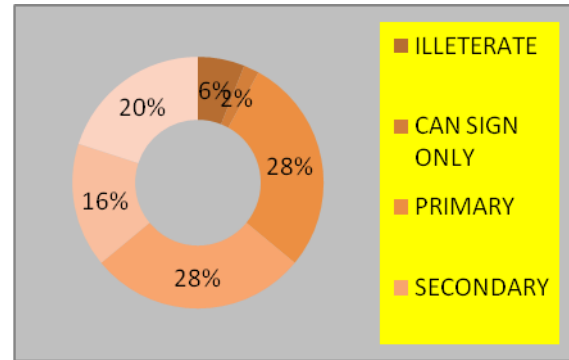
Figure- 4 INCOME CONDITION
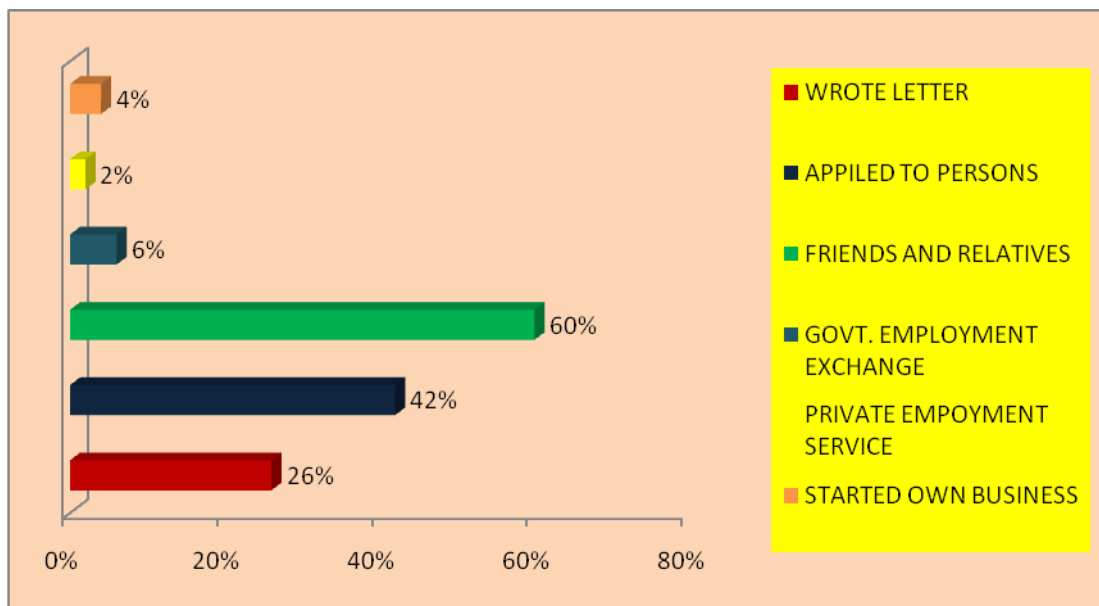

Figure- 3 LEVEL OF EDUCATION
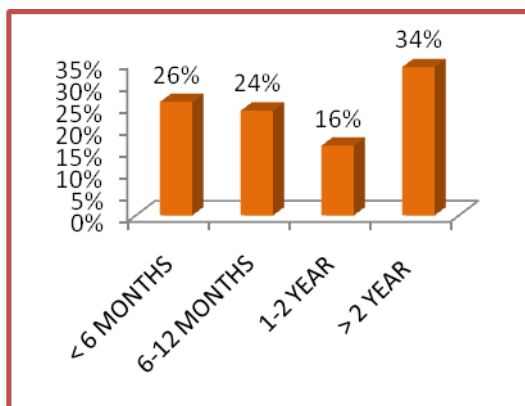

Figure- 5 WAYS OF SEARCHING

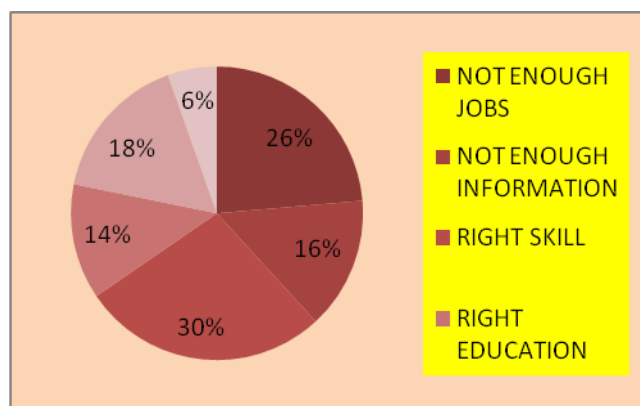**Figure – 6 Duration of Unemployment**

Figure- 7 Reasons of Unsuccessfulnes

Figure- 8 JOB PREFERANCE

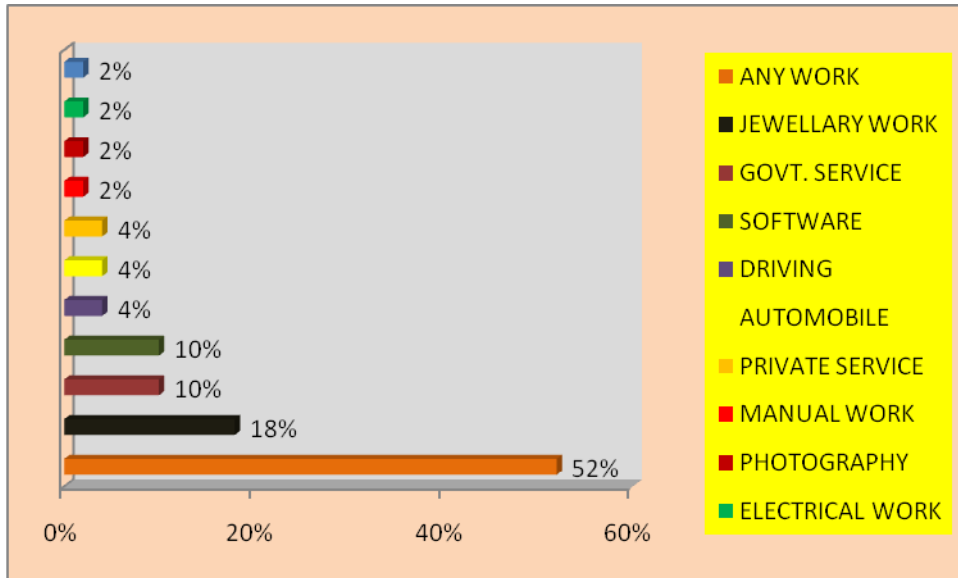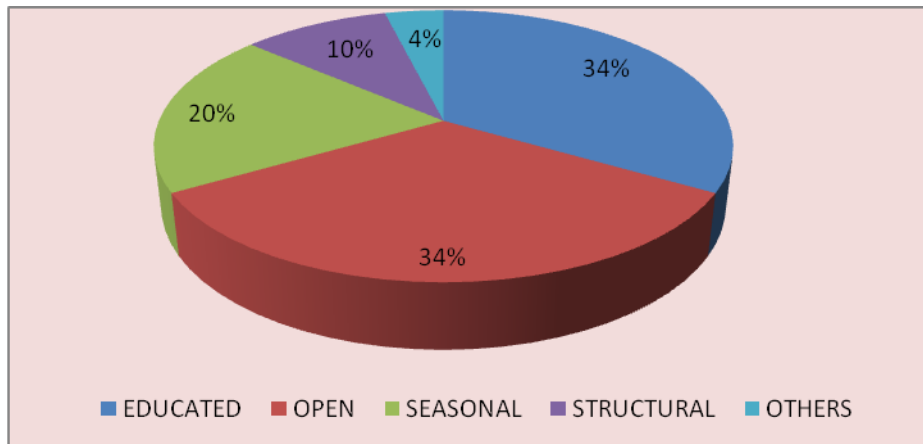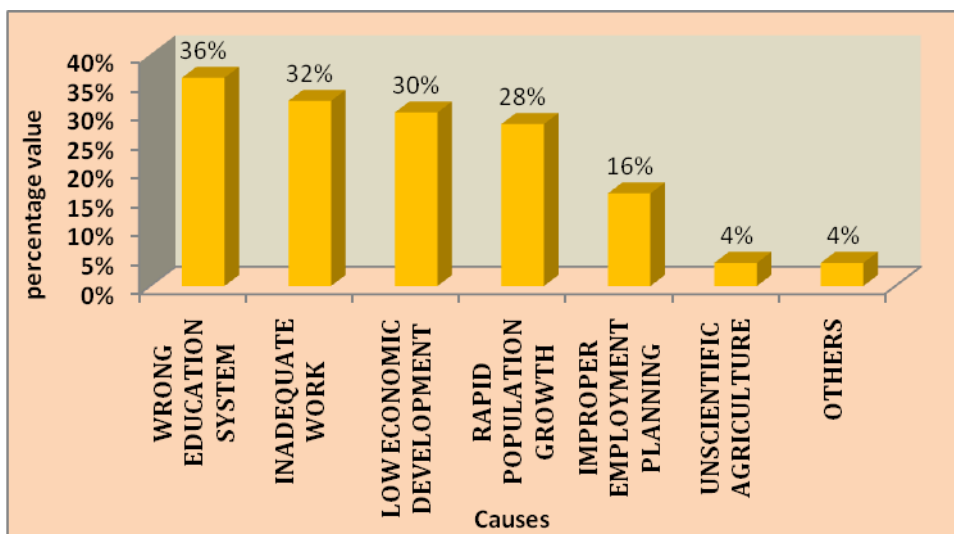**Figure- 9 NATURE OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

Figure- 10 CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT