
EFFECTS OF TELANGANA'S POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVES ON WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING AND HOUSEHOLD WELFARE

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the impact of Telangana's poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) on women's decision-making and household welfare. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group discussions to evaluate the effectiveness of programs such as Aasara pensions, Kalyana Lakshmi, and Amma Odi. The results indicate a significant increase in women's involvement in household decision-making, particularly in areas such as financial management, child education, and healthcare, with a notable rise in their control over family finances and resource allocation. Household welfare also showed substantial improvements, with enhanced access to education, healthcare, and financial security. Despite these positive outcomes, societal barriers such as patriarchal structures and cultural resistance still present challenges to full empowerment, though their impact has been reduced through these initiatives. The study also identifies key recommendations for further strengthening women's empowerment, including expanding financial resources, increasing skill development opportunities, and promoting male involvement in gender equality initiatives. Overall, the findings highlight the transformative potential of PRIs in reshaping gender dynamics and improving household welfare, while emphasizing the need for continued efforts to address cultural norms and increase the reach of these programs.

Keywords: Telangana, Poverty Reduction Initiatives, Women's Empowerment, Household Welfare, Decision-Making, Aasara Pensions, Kalyana Lakshmi, Amma Odi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In India, the self-help groups (SHG's) are town construct associations that concentration with respect to building the reserve funds and credit, and additionally the social empowerment of their individuals. An average gathering has 10-20 poor women having comparative financial foundations who meet once seven days to pool investment funds and talk about issues of shared significance. The store is saved in the gathering's financial balance which is accessible for giving credit to the individuals in require. One of their targets is to enhance community issues, for example, the mishandle of women, alcoholism, the dowry framework, educational quality, and insufficient infrastructure. Women and SHGs in many parts of the nation have made progress in conveying the women to the standard of decision making. The SHG in our nation has turned into a wellspring of motivation for women's welfare arrangement

of SHG is a practical other option to accomplish the goals of rural development and to get community participation in all rural development programs. SHG is additionally a practical sorted out set up to dispense miniaturized scale credit to the rural women and empowering them together into entrepreneurial exercises. To reduce the poverty and to empower the women, the miniaturized scale fund, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and credit management groups have additionally begun in India

Problem of the Study: The impact of Telangana's poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) on women's decision-making and household welfare. Despite the implementation of several welfare programs like Aasara pensions, Kalyana Lakshmi, and Amma Odi, which aim to alleviate poverty and empower women, there remains a gap in understanding how these programs specifically affect women's roles in households, their

financial independence, and overall socio-economic well-being. The study seeks to identify the challenges women face in fully utilizing these initiatives, the barriers posed by traditional gender norms, and the effectiveness of these programs in improving household welfare. This research aims to contribute valuable insights into how such initiatives can be strengthened to promote greater gender equality and socio-economic empowerment for women in Telangana.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The state of Telangana has implemented various poverty reduction initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic status of its citizens, particularly focusing on women's empowerment. Key welfare schemes such as the *Aasara pensions* for vulnerable groups, *Kalyana Lakshmi* for marriage support, and *Amma Odi/KCR Kits* for maternal and child health have been central to these efforts. Studies indicate that financial support through such programs plays a significant role in enhancing women's decision-making power within households. For instance, Kanakalatha (n.d.) discusses how participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) leads to increased financial independence for women, fostering a greater sense of control over household finances and resources. This independence is linked with a shift in household dynamics, where women are able to influence decisions concerning education, healthcare, and economic activities. Furthermore, Ali (2023) notes that while the initiatives have had positive effects, barriers such as lack of awareness and logistical challenges hinder their full potential, especially in rural areas. Research by Suresh (n.d.) and Hossain and Nikolov (2021) similarly highlights that women's involvement in economic activities through these programs has not only empowered them financially but also socially, as they gain leadership roles within their communities. However, traditional gender norms still persist, as highlighted by Ali (2023), where despite increased autonomy, women's roles are still often confined within

the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the long-term impact of these initiatives on household welfare is significant, with improved outcomes in child health, education, and overall family wellbeing, as supported by Research Advances (2023) and the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP, 2022). In conclusion, while Telangana's poverty reduction schemes have made strides in empowering women, ongoing challenges in access and cultural norms continue to shape the full extent of their impact on household welfare and decision-making.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The methodology employed in this study combining surveys, focus group discussions, and participant observation has proven effective in capturing the nuanced impact of Telangana's poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) on women's empowerment and household welfare. The use of both qualitative and quantitative data allowed for a comprehensive analysis of how women's roles in decision-making and household welfare have evolved through these initiatives. By triangulating data from multiple sources, including surveys of women beneficiaries and interviews with community leaders, the study has provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of PRIs in transforming gender dynamics within households.

Research Design

The study used a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between Telangana's PRIs and the empowerment of women in household decision-making. The design aimed to describe the extent of women's involvement in various household decisions before and after participating in PRIs, as well as to assess improvements in household welfare.

Research Approach

The research approach was mixed-methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. This approach allowed for a more holistic understanding of the impact of PRIs,

incorporating both statistical data and personal experiences of the participants.

1. **Quantitative Approach:** Surveys were administered to collect numerical data on the women's involvement in household decision-making, their access to financial resources, and changes in household welfare indicators.
2. **Qualitative Approach:** Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and participant observations were conducted to capture personal experiences, perceptions, and barriers that women face in accessing and benefiting from the welfare programs.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework for this study draws on several key theories related to empowerment, gender roles, and poverty alleviation. These frameworks provide a lens through which the impact of Telangana's poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) on women's decision-making and household welfare can be understood.

1. **Empowerment Theory:** To understanding the transformative impact of PRIs on women's lives. According to Rappaport (1987), empowerment involves gaining control over resources and decisions that affect one's life. The implementation of welfare programs like *Aasara pensions* and *Kalyana Lakshmi* has empowered women by increasing their access to financial resources, thereby enabling them to have a stronger voice in household decision-making processes. This theory suggests that empowerment is not just about individual agency, but also about the capacity to challenge and transform existing social structures that limit opportunities for marginalized groups, especially women.

2. **Gender and Development Theory (GAD):** The theory offers insights into the social and economic inequalities between men and women. This theory posits that development interventions must address the underlying gendered power imbalances in society. The PRIs in Telangana, by focusing on the economic and social empowerment of women, challenge traditional patriarchal structures that limit women's access to resources and decision-making power. GAD encourages the analysis of how social norms, roles, and relationships influence women's access to welfare programs and their ability to exert influence within the household and community.
3. **Capability Approach (Amartya Sen):** a framework for evaluating well-being and development based on the freedoms and capabilities individuals have to lead a life they value. This theory emphasizes not only economic resources but also the agency and choices individuals can make. The PRIs in Telangana align with Sen's approach by expanding women's capabilities through improved access to health services, education, and financial resources, allowing them to make meaningful choices that impact both their own lives and their families' well-being. Women who are part of welfare schemes are better positioned to realize their potential and contribute more equitably to household decision-making.
4. **Social Capital Theory:** focuses on the networks, relationships, and trust that individuals can build and leverage for social and economic benefits. In the context of Telangana's poverty reduction programs, participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and local

governance can increase women’s social capital by fostering community solidarity and cooperation. This increased social capital can lead to enhanced bargaining power, both within the household and in the community, as women can access resources, information, and networks that were previously unavailable to them.

5. **Bargaining Theory:** the developed by scholars like Akerlof (1980), examines how individuals within households negotiate for resources and power. Women’s increased participation in decision-making through PRIs, such as control over financial resources and child education, is a direct application of this theory. As women gain more access to income and social resources, their bargaining position within the household improves, leading to greater gender equality in family decisions.

Data Collection Methods

Surveys: A structured questionnaire was developed to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to assess:

- The level of women’s involvement in household decision-making.
- The impact of PRIs on financial management, healthcare, education, and household budgeting.
- Indicators of household welfare, including education, health, nutrition, and financial stability.

The survey was distributed to a representative sample of women beneficiaries of Telangana’s PRIs across rural and urban regions. The survey responses were recorded and analyzed for patterns of empowerment.

The Area of the Study:

The area of this study focuses on the impact of Telangana’s poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) on women’s decision-making and household welfare. Specifically, it examines how key welfare programs such as *Aasara*

pensions, Kalyana Lakshmi, Amma Odi, and KCR Kits have influenced women’s roles within households, their participation in decision-making, and overall improvements in household welfare. The study also evaluates the barriers that women face, including societal norms and empowerment challenges, and how these initiatives help mitigate these challenges. The results from this study provide a comprehensive view of how women in Telangana have benefited from these programs, showing significant improvements in decision-making capabilities and household welfare indicators. Women’s involvement in financial management, healthcare, child education, and other key decisions has increased substantially, which reflects the positive influence of these poverty reduction programs.

Table 1: Summary of Women's Responses to Telangana's Poverty Reduction Initiatives

Area	Response Based on Results	Impact on Women
Decision-Making	Increased participation in financial, education, and healthcare decisions.	Enhanced agency in household matters.
Economic Empowerment	Greater control over finances due to welfare programs.	Increased financial independence and security.
Societal Norms	Reduction in patriarchal norms, but some barriers remain.	Greater empowerment, but cultural resistance persists.
Household	Improved	Better family

Welfare	access to education, healthcare, and financial stability.	outcomes in health, education, and financial security.
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Sampling Strategy

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants for the study. The sampling was done in two phases:

1. Phase 1: Stratification based on geographic location (rural vs. urban areas) to capture the diversity in the impact of PRIs across different regions.
2. Phase 2: Random selection of women who are beneficiaries of at least one of the key PRIs, ensuring a representation of both new and long-term beneficiaries.

The total sample size consisted of 200 women beneficiaries from various districts in Telangana.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Based on the results from the tables, the findings indicate significant progress in enhancing women’s empowerment and household welfare through Telangana’s poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs). Women’s involvement in household decision-making has shown considerable improvement, with a notable rise in their control over financial management, child education, and healthcare decisions. This shift is reflected in the marked increase in household welfare indicators, such as better access to education, healthcare, and financial security. However, societal norms and empowerment barriers, such as patriarchal family structures and cultural resistance, still present challenges. Despite these barriers, PRIs have led to a reduction in the influence of such norms, demonstrating the gradual empowerment of women. The study suggests several recommendations, including increasing awareness programs, expanding financial resources, and encouraging male participation in gender equality, all of which are expected to

further strengthen women’s empowerment and decision-making capacity in households and communities. These results underscore the transformative potential of targeted welfare interventions in reshaping gender dynamics and improving overall household welfare.

Table 2: Women's Role in Household Decision-Making

Decision-Making Area	Before PRI Participation	After PRI Participation	Change (%)
Financial Management	Low (15%)	High (60%)	+45%
Child Education	Moderate (30%)	High (75%)	+45%
Healthcare Decisions	Low (20%)	Moderate (55%)	+35%
Household Budgeting	Low (10%)	High (65%)	+55%
Family Investments	Minimal (5%)	Moderate (50%)	+45%

The results show a significant increase in women’s involvement in key household decisions, particularly in financial management, child education, and household budgeting. The data indicates that after participating in Telangana’s PRIs, women’s agency in household matters increased substantially, reflecting the empowerment gained through programs like *Aasara pensions* and *Kalyana Lakshmi*. These programs have enabled women to take on more active roles in managing family resources, which traditionally were controlled by male family members.

Table 3: Household Welfare Indicators

Welfare Indicator	Before PRI Participation	After PRI Participation	Change (%)
Education Access	Low (25%)	High (80%)	+55%
Healthcare Access	Moderate (40%)	High (70%)	+30%
Financial Security	Low (20%)	Moderate (50%)	+30%
Nutritional Status	Poor (30%)	Improved (60%)	+30%
Housing Conditions	Substandard (35%)	Improved (65%)	+30%

Household welfare indicators show clear improvements post-PRI participation. The most significant increase is seen in education access, where the percentage of women reporting improved access to education for their children rose by 55%. Similarly, healthcare access and financial security improved by 25% and 35%, respectively. The participation in PRIs has directly contributed to better health outcomes, education for children, and financial stability within households.

Table 4: Societal Norms and Empowerment Barriers

Barrier/Challenge	Pre-PRI Situation	Post-PRI Situation	Change (%)
Patriarchal Family Structure	Strong (80%)	Moderate (50%)	-30%
Limited Access to Resources	High (70%)	Moderate (40%)	-30%
Lack of Awareness	High (60%)	Low (25%)	-35%
Cultural Resistance	Strong (65%)	Moderate (35%)	-30%

Gender Stereotypes	Prevalent (75%)	Reduced (40%)	-35%
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The study shows a noticeable reduction in societal barriers such as patriarchal family structures, cultural resistance, and gender stereotypes. These changes indicate that PRIs have played a pivotal role in shifting traditional gender roles, promoting women's autonomy, and challenging outdated societal norms. While these barriers have decreased, some continue to exist, particularly in rural and more conservative areas, highlighting the need for continued advocacy and awareness programs.

Discussions:

The results of the study highlight the profound impact that Telangana's poverty reduction initiatives (PRIs) have had on women's empowerment and household welfare, though challenges remain. The increase in women's involvement in household decision-making, particularly in areas such as financial management, child education, and healthcare, signals a positive shift in gender roles within the household. This change reflects not only the economic benefits brought by PRIs but also a cultural transformation towards greater gender equality. The significant improvements in household welfare indicators, such as education and healthcare access, suggest that women's increased participation in financial and decision-making processes contributes to broader positive outcomes for families.

However, the persistence of barriers such as patriarchal structures and cultural resistance shows that societal norms still shape women's roles and restrict their full empowerment. Despite progress, these entrenched challenges need to be addressed through continued policy efforts and awareness campaigns. The recommendations put forward, including enhancing legal protections, increasing financial resources, and promoting male involvement in gender equality, provide a roadmap for overcoming these obstacles. In conclusion, while PRIs have made substantial

strides in improving women's roles within households and communities, ongoing efforts to tackle deep-rooted societal norms and empower women further are crucial for achieving sustainable gender equality.

CONCLUSION:

The poverty reduction initiatives in Telangana have played a transformative role in enhancing women's empowerment and improving household welfare. These programs have notably increased women's involvement in decision-making across financial, educational, and healthcare domains, leading to measurable improvements in household welfare indicators such as education access, healthcare quality, and financial security. The reduction in barriers, such as patriarchal family structures and societal resistance, further underscores the positive impact of these initiatives. However, societal norms still pose significant challenges, limiting the full realization of gender equality. Despite the progress made, the persistence of these cultural barriers suggests the need for continued efforts to dismantle traditional gender roles.

Looking ahead, the future scope of women's empowerment in Telangana lies in addressing the remaining challenges. Expanding the reach of welfare programs to marginalized groups, particularly in rural and tribal areas, is essential for achieving equitable empowerment. Furthermore, the integration of gender-sensitive education in school curriculums, coupled with enhanced skill development programs, will be crucial in empowering the next generation of women. The active involvement of men in gender equality initiatives will also be key to shifting deeply entrenched norms. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to measure the long-term effects of these interventions, and assess the evolving nature of women's empowerment within different socio-economic contexts. By focusing on these areas, Telangana can further strengthen its commitment to gender equality and create a more inclusive society for women.

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