

Exploring Regional Disparities in the Effectiveness of Poverty Alleviation Programs: A Study of IKP's Impact Across Mandals in Nalgonda District

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Abstract

This study explores the regional disparities in the effectiveness of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program in Nalgonda District, Telangana, particularly its impact on Scheduled Castes (SCs). IKP aims to reduce poverty and empower women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs), offering access to microfinance, skill development, and income-generating opportunities. However, the success of IKP varies significantly across regions due to local factors such as community engagement, local leadership, cultural norms, and infrastructure availability. By comparing the effectiveness of IKP across Devarakonda, Miryalaguda, and Nalgonda mandals, the study identifies key determinants of success and failure. Findings reveal that regions with better community mobilization and stronger local leadership showed higher success in economic empowerment and poverty reduction, while areas with weaker infrastructure and market access struggled to achieve similar outcomes. The study highlights the importance of tailored interventions to address local challenges, enhance financial literacy, and improve market access for women. These findings offer valuable insights for policy makers to refine poverty alleviation strategies, ensuring that they are more context-specific and capable of achieving sustainable results across diverse regions.

Keywords: *Indira Kranthi Pathakam, regional disparities, poverty alleviation, self-help groups, economic empowerment*

I. Introduction

Poverty alleviation programs in India have been a central focus of government policy for decades, aiming to reduce economic disparities and improve the living conditions of marginalized communities. India's vast rural population, especially from the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), remains disproportionately affected by poverty. As part of its commitment to inclusive development, the Indian government has implemented several targeted poverty reduction initiatives. One of the most significant programs in this regard is the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP), launched in 2000 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana), with the aim of promoting economic self-sufficiency for the rural poor, particularly women.

The IKP primarily focuses on empowering women by organizing them into Self-Help Groups (SHGs), offering them access to microcredit, skill development, and financial literacy training. These SHGs serve as platforms for collective action, where women can pool resources, access loans, and engage in income-generating activities, all aimed at reducing poverty and increasing social mobility. Through these groups, women are empowered not only economically but also socially, by gaining confidence in leadership, decision-making, and participation in local governance. However, the effectiveness of the IKP program varies across different regions. While some areas have seen substantial improvements in income levels, employment opportunities, and social empowerment, others have struggled due to factors such as poor infrastructure, limited market access, and social barriers like caste discrimination. The Devarakonda Revenue Division, Miryalaguda Revenue Division, and Nalgonda Revenue Division regions in Telangana, where IKP is actively implemented, have shown varied results, highlighting the need to understand the regional disparities in the success of poverty alleviation programs. This research aims to explore these disparities and identify factors contributing to the program's varying effectiveness across different mandals in Nalgonda District.

Statement of the Problem

The Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program, implemented in various districts of Telangana, has aimed at poverty alleviation through the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), primarily focusing on women from marginalized communities, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs). While the program has had notable successes in

empowering women economically and socially, the effectiveness of IKP in different regions of Nalgonda District has shown significant regional disparities. These disparities highlight the varying levels of success across different mandals within the district, with some areas experiencing considerable progress in economic stability, access to financial resources, and social mobility, while others face challenges that hinder the program's success.

In regions like Devarakonda and parts of Miryalaguda, women in SHGs have shown positive outcomes in terms of financial management skills, income generation, and social standing. In contrast, areas such as Nakkallapalli, Palle Pahad, and Ammanabol have reported lower levels of improvement, indicating that the program's impact is not uniformly distributed. These differences suggest that local factors such as community engagement, infrastructure, access to markets, and social norms play a significant role in determining the success of poverty alleviation efforts. Understanding the reasons behind these regional variations is crucial for fine-tuning the IKP program, ensuring that interventions are more context-sensitive and targeted to the specific needs of each region. Therefore, the problem addressed by this study is to explore and analyze the regional disparities in the implementation and impact of IKP across different mandals of Nalgonda District.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the effectiveness of IKP in various mandals of Nalgonda district.
2. To assess the impact of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) on Scheduled Castes (SCs).
3. To understand the regional factors influencing the success of IKP programs.

Research Questions

1. How does the impact of IKP vary across different mandals in Nalgonda district?
2. What are the socio-economic factors that contribute to the effectiveness of IKP?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lay in its potential to provide valuable insights into the regional variations in the effectiveness of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program. By examining the disparities across different mandals in Nalgonda District, the research aimed to understand the factors that contributed to the varying success rates of the program. The study highlighted how local context, including community engagement, infrastructure, market access, and social norms, influenced the outcomes of poverty alleviation efforts. Understanding these variations was crucial for identifying the barriers and challenges faced by women in specific regions, particularly those from Scheduled Castes (SCs), who are the primary beneficiaries of the program.

The findings of the study were significant in informing policy adjustments and in shaping local strategies for poverty alleviation. By identifying regions where the program had not been as successful, the study offered recommendations for improving implementation, addressing resource gaps, and ensuring that interventions were more context-specific. This understanding could lead to the development of more tailored approaches, such as region-specific training, market access initiatives, and community mobilization efforts, which would ultimately enhance the effectiveness of IKP and similar programs in the future. Additionally, it could guide policymakers in making informed decisions to allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that the benefits of poverty alleviation programs reached all communities equitably.

II. Literature Review

Poverty Alleviation Programs in India: Review of Major National Poverty Alleviation Schemes, Focusing on Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) India has implemented a wide array of poverty alleviation programs to combat the deeply rooted poverty in rural areas, with a particular focus on Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). These programs include initiatives like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP). IKP, launched in 2000 in Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana), sought to empower women from rural households through the formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs). It focused on providing women with access to microfinance, skill development, and capacity building to enhance their financial inclusion and economic independence.

A study by Saidanna & Sailaja (2011) highlighted the positive effects of IKP on poverty reduction in Andhra Pradesh, noting improvements in financial independence and social status for women in rural communities. Similarly, Prensushi & Gupta (2014) found that the IKP's emphasis on women's empowerment through SHGs contributed to an increase in household income and socio-economic mobility, although success varied across regions. However, challenges such as limited market access, insufficient funds, and social resistance were identified as barriers to its overall success, with regional variations in effectiveness. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Women's Empowerment: Review of Literature on the Role of SHGs in Promoting Financial Inclusion and Empowerment for Marginalized Communities, Especially Scheduled Castes

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been central to India's poverty alleviation strategy, particularly under programs like IKP, NRLM, and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

SHGs have been instrumental in promoting financial inclusion by providing marginalized communities, especially Scheduled Castes (SCs), with access to microcredit, financial literacy, and opportunities for entrepreneurship. These groups have proven to be effective in enhancing women's financial independence and promoting social cohesion among marginalized communities.

Research by Kabeer (2010) and Reddy et al. (2016) emphasized the role of SHGs in promoting economic autonomy for women, highlighting that access to microfinance allows women to invest in income-generating activities, enhancing household income. Thirupalu & Muninarayanappa (2025) argued that SHGs create a social support system, empowering women to take on leadership roles and participate more actively in local governance. Milon (2024) further suggested that SHGs increase women's social capital, which leads to greater participation in community development and improved decision-making within households.

However, studies by Ballem et al. (2012) and Neelaiah (2017) identified challenges such as limited training, poor financial literacy, and insufficient marketing support for products generated by SHGs, which hinder their full potential. The literature reveals that while SHGs have contributed to women's empowerment, the program's success is contingent upon effective capacity building, local support, and infrastructure development.

Regional Disparities in Poverty Alleviation: Previous Studies Highlighting Regional Variations in the Success of Similar Programs Across India, Particularly in Rural Areas. Several studies have analyzed the regional disparities in the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs across India, especially in rural areas. Rangarajan & Mahendra Dev (2022) found that the success of poverty alleviation schemes like IKP and MGNREGA varies significantly between regions due to factors such as local governance, community participation, infrastructure availability, and social norms. For example, in states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, where local community engagement is high, the programs have shown greater success compared to other states with weak local governance or poor infrastructure.

Reddy et al. (2016) examined how regional economic conditions and social structures in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have influenced the success of poverty reduction programs. The study highlighted that regions with strong local leadership and well-established SHGs saw better outcomes in terms of financial inclusion and poverty reduction, while regions lacking these elements faced significant barriers to achieving the program's goals. Simangunsong & Sihotang (2023) explored the impact of economic conditions on the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs and found that regional variations in the availability of resources and local infrastructure often led to uneven impacts, particularly in rural settings.

Impact of IKP in Telangana: Analysis of Studies Conducted in Telangana Regarding IKP and Its Influence on Women's Socio-Economic Mobility and Community Development. The Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program has had a substantial impact on women's empowerment and community development in Telangana. Studies conducted by Srinivasan (2016) and Reddy & Rani (2023) on the impact of IKP in Telangana showed significant improvements in socio-economic mobility, especially for Scheduled Caste women. These women gained better access to education, healthcare, and market opportunities, contributing to an overall improvement in their quality of life.

Research by Milon (2024) and Herianingrum et al. (2024) suggested that IKP's focus on microcredit and self-help groups empowered women to initiate small businesses, thereby improving household income and reducing dependence on traditional patriarchal structures. Moreover, Simangunsong & Sihotang (2023) found that participation in IKP led to greater involvement in local decision-making and governance. However, studies by Reddy et al. (2016) and Saidanna & Sailaja (2011) pointed to significant regional disparities in the program's success. While regions like Devarakonda showed positive results, other areas like Miryalaguda and Nalgonda struggled due to poor infrastructure, limited market access, and social resistance. These studies highlighted the need for region-specific interventions to address local barriers to success and enhance the overall impact of the IKP program in Telangana.

III. Methodology

The research employed a mixed-methods approach with a case study design to explore the regional disparities in the effectiveness of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program across different mandals in Nalgonda District, Telangana. This approach allowed for both qualitative insights into the social and economic impacts of IKP, as well as quantitative data to provide a broader understanding of program effectiveness. The case study design enabled an in-depth exploration of selected villages and mandals, allowing for a detailed examination of local dynamics, barriers, and opportunities.

Study Area

The study was conducted across multiple regions in Nalgonda District, which were selected based on the diversity of outcomes observed in the implementation of the IKP program. These areas include:

- Devarakonda Revenue Division: Cherukupally, Kandukoor, Bollenapally, and Nizam Nagar.
- Miryalaguda Revenue Division: Venkatadri Palam, Chillapuram, Kothagudem, and Gogubarigudam.

- Nalgonda Revenue Division: Nakkallapalli, Palle Pahad, Shapalli, and Ammanabol. These locations were chosen to represent areas with varied economic conditions, infrastructure, community engagement, and differing success levels in terms of IKP outcomes.

Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select representative villages from each mandal based on their participation in the IKP program and the regional disparities observed in program outcomes. The selected villages provided a balanced mix of successful and less successful implementations of I KP, which allowed for a comparative study of factors influencing program effectiveness. Purposive sampling helped ensure that the chosen villages provided relevant and specific insights into the regional variations in IKP's impact on poverty alleviation. In-depth interviews were conducted with Self-Help Group (SHG) members, local leaders, and IKP officials to gather firsthand accounts and detailed perspectives on the program's implementation and impact.

Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected through a combination of primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SHG members, providing rich qualitative data on their experiences with the IKP program, including their financial independence, social empowerment, and challenges faced. Focus groups were organized with SHG members to encourage discussions about their collective experiences, providing a deeper understanding of community-level impacts and regional differences. Surveys were distributed to gather quantitative data from a larger sample of SHG participants, assessing aspects such as economic stability, market access, and social cohesion.

Secondary Data:

Official reports and government documents related to the IKP program were reviewed to understand the policy framework and program objectives. Program evaluations and annual reports provided secondary insights into the implementation and impact assessments of IKP across different regions of Nalgonda.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques to draw meaningful conclusions from the diverse data sources.

Qualitative Analysis:

Thematic coding was used to analyze the interview responses and focus group discussions. This process involved identifying recurring themes, patterns, and differences related to key variables such as economic empowerment, leadership development, and community participation. Key themes were extracted and categorized to compare the outcomes across the different mandals and to understand how local dynamics, community engagement, and infrastructure influenced the success or challenges of the IKP program in each region.

Comparative Analysis:

A comparative analysis was conducted to examine the regional disparities in IKP's effectiveness across the mandals. The study compared economic outcomes, participation rates, and social empowerment of women across the selected villages. This helped identify specific success factors and barriers in different regions, such as access to markets, local leadership, and social norms.

Quantitative Data Analysis:

For the survey data, appropriate statistical tools (such as descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, or t-tests) were used to analyze the numerical responses, identifying patterns and trends in the socio-economic indicators across different mandals. Statistical tools helped quantify the impact of the IKP program on variables such as income levels, business success, and market access in the selected regions. By using a mixed-methods approach, this study was able to offer a comprehensive understanding of the regional variations in the effectiveness of the IKP program, while also providing actionable insights into how policy adjustments and tailored interventions could enhance the program's success in diverse local contexts.

IV. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program across different mandals in Nalgonda District revealed significant regional disparities in its effectiveness. This section discusses the results of the data analysis, which includes descriptive statistics, a chi-square test, and a t-test, comparing various mandals and exploring the factors influencing the program's success.

Comparison of IKP Effectiveness Across Mandals

To compare the effectiveness of IKP in terms of economic empowerment, participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and poverty reduction across different mandals, descriptive statistics were calculated, followed by a t-test to determine whether the differences observed between the mandals were statistically significant.

Descriptive Statistics:

The following table summarizes key variables across the selected mandals:

Table-1

Mandal	Economic Empowerment (Income Increase)	Participation in SHGs (%)	Poverty Reduction (%)
Devarakonda	40%	85%	55%
Miryalaguda	30%	65%	45%
Nalgonda	20%	75%	50%

Devarakonda showed the highest success rates in economic empowerment and poverty reduction, with 40% of SHG members reporting an increase in income, and 55% of households experiencing poverty reduction. Miryalaguda and Nalgonda demonstrated lower levels of success in these areas, with Miryalaguda showing a notable difference in SHG participation (65%) and economic outcomes (30% income increase), compared to Devarakonda. Nalgonda, despite having relatively high participation in SHGs (75%), showed the lowest level of economic empowerment (20%) and poverty reduction (50%).

t-test Results:

Table 2

t-test Results for Economic Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Across Mandals

Comparison	Devarakonda Mean	Miryalaguda Mean	Nalgonda Mean	t-value	df	p-value	Significance
Economic Empowerment (Income Increase)	40%	30%	20%	3.42	97	<0.05	Significant
Poverty Reduction (%)	55%	45%	50%	2.05	97	<0.05	Significant

Interpretation: The t-test results show significant differences in economic empowerment and poverty reduction between Devarakonda and the other mandals, with a p-value of <0.05 for both economic empowerment (income increase) and poverty reduction. Devarakonda demonstrated significantly better outcomes than Miryalaguda and Nalgonda.

A t-test was conducted to compare the mean success rates in economic empowerment and poverty reduction between Devarakonda and the other regions (Miryalaguda and Nalgonda). The results showed a statistically significant difference in economic empowerment ($p < 0.05$), indicating that Devarakonda had better economic outcomes compared to Miryalaguda and Nalgonda. The difference in poverty reduction was also significant ($p < 0.05$), showing that the program had a more substantial impact in Devarakonda.

Factors Influencing Effectiveness

Several factors were identified as influencing the success of the IKP program across different regions. The factors include community engagement, local leadership, cultural factors, infrastructure availability, and access to education and healthcare services.

Community Engagement and Local Leadership:

In Devarakonda, strong community engagement and active local leadership were significant contributors to the program's success. Local leaders played a pivotal role in mobilizing SHG members, encouraging active participation, and ensuring the sustainability of SHGs. Miryalaguda and Nalgonda struggled with weaker local leadership, which hindered community collaboration and reduced the effectiveness of the program.

Cultural Factors and Gender Norms:

Cultural factors, particularly gender norms, influenced women's participation in SHGs. In Devarakonda, where gender equality was promoted through community support, women participated more actively, resulting in better economic outcomes. In contrast, Miryalaguda and Nalgonda had stronger patriarchal norms, where women's involvement in economic activities was limited. This contributed to lower levels of empowerment and economic success in these regions.

Infrastructure Availability and Market Access:

Infrastructure and market access were found to be crucial factors in the success of the IKP program. Devarakonda benefited from better road networks, communication facilities, and access to local markets, which allowed women to sell their products at higher prices and expand their income sources. In contrast, Miryalaguda and Nalgonda

faced significant challenges due to poor market linkages and infrastructure deficiencies, limiting their economic potential.

Access to Education and Healthcare Services:

Finally, access to education and healthcare services played a significant role in determining the success of the program. Regions with better access to education and healthcare showed more sustainable economic empowerment. Devarakonda had relatively better infrastructure in terms of both education and healthcare, leading to higher levels of economic resilience and socio-economic mobility. However, in Miryalaguda and Nalgonda, poor access to education and healthcare impeded overall progress, preventing SHG members from fully utilizing the resources provided through IKP.

Chi-Square Test Results:

Table 3

Chi-Square Test Results for Community Engagement and Economic Outcomes

Variable	Observed Value	Expected Value	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	p-value	Significance
Community Engagement vs. Economic Empowerment	Devarakonda (High)	45 (High Engagement)	35 (Expected)	8.4	<0.05
	Miryalaguda (Medium)	30 (Medium Engagement)	28 (Expected)		
	Nalgonda (Low)	25 (Low Engagement)	26 (Expected)		

Interpretation: The chi-square test shows a statistically significant association between community engagement and economic empowerment, with a p-value of <0.05 indicating that stronger community engagement in Devarakonda is significantly linked to higher economic empowerment outcomes.

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between community engagement and economic outcomes. The results indicated a strong association ($p < 0.05$) between active community engagement and the likelihood of achieving better economic outcomes in Devarakonda compared to Miryalaguda and Nalgonda. This supports the hypothesis that community involvement and strong leadership positively influence the program's effectiveness. The results of this study underscore the regional disparities in the effectiveness of the IKP program. The analysis revealed that Devarakonda achieved the highest success in economic empowerment and poverty reduction, driven by strong community engagement, local leadership, and better infrastructure. In contrast, Miryalaguda and Nalgonda faced challenges due to limited infrastructure, gender norms, and lack of market access, which hindered their success. The statistical analyses, including t-tests and chi-square tests, provided robust evidence of the factors influencing regional differences in the IKP's impact. These findings highlight the need for context-specific interventions and targeted strategies to address local challenges and improve the effectiveness of poverty alleviation programs in rural areas.

V. Conclusion

The study revealed significant regional disparities in the effectiveness of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program across different mandals in Nalgonda District. The findings showed that regions like Devarakonda experienced the highest success rates in terms of economic empowerment, participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and overall poverty reduction, with better access to resources, stronger community engagement, and effective local leadership. In contrast, regions such as Miryalaguda and Nalgonda showed lower levels of success, with challenges such as poor infrastructure, limited market access, and stronger gender norms hindering the program's effectiveness. The statistical analysis highlighted the importance of community engagement, local leadership, and access to education and healthcare in influencing the program's success. In regions with active community participation and local leaders, the program had a greater impact on women's socio-economic mobility. However, areas with weaker social structures and cultural resistance to women's empowerment faced difficulties in achieving similar outcomes. These findings underscore the need for tailored interventions that address local barriers, such as infrastructure limitations and cultural factors, to enhance the effectiveness of IKP. A more context-sensitive approach can ensure that poverty alleviation programs are better equipped to deliver sustainable and impactful results, particularly for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and marginalized communities.

VI. Policy Recommendations:

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of the Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) program across regions. First, tailored interventions should be developed to address the specific local barriers and leverage the unique strengths of each region. By considering factors such as local infrastructure, community dynamics, and cultural norms, the program can be more responsive to the needs of each area, ensuring better outcomes. Second, there is a need for enhanced training programs that focus on financial literacy, business skills, and market access. Women in regions like Miryalaguda and Nalgonda, where economic outcomes were lower, would benefit from targeted training that enables them to manage microenterprises, make informed financial decisions, and overcome market barriers. Providing more

comprehensive support in business development will help participants utilize IKP resources more effectively, leading to greater long-term success. Lastly, community engagement should be strengthened by focusing on building local leadership and creating more inclusive platforms for decision-making. In areas with limited community involvement, it is essential to empower local leaders and ensure that women, especially from Scheduled Castes, have a voice in program design and implementation. Strengthening local participation will foster ownership of the program and improve its sustainability, leading to more impactful and equitable outcomes for marginalized communities.

VII. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should explore how regional variations influence the effectiveness of other poverty alleviation programs across different states and regions in India. Understanding how local factors, such as infrastructure, social norms, and economic conditions, impact the success of programs like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) could provide valuable insights into designing more context-specific interventions. Additionally, examining the long-term sustainability of women-led businesses that emerge from poverty alleviation programs is crucial. Research could focus on how SHG members transition from microenterprises to sustainable businesses, the challenges they face in scaling up, and the role of ongoing training, market linkages, and mentorship in their success. Investigating the factors that contribute to the longevity and growth of these businesses, especially in rural and marginalized communities, will provide critical information on how to support economic resilience over the long term. Further studies could also examine how gender dynamics and local leadership influence the development and sustainability of these enterprises, ensuring a comprehensive approach to empowerment.

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