

## **Socio-Economic and Livelihood Conditions of Other Backward Classes in Telangana: A Study of Vikarabad District with Reference to Welfare Scheme Benefits**

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### **Abstract**

*The socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana remain a critical area of inquiry within the broader discourse on caste, equity, and rural development. This study, conducted in Vikarabad district, employed a descriptive research design with a sample of 364 respondents, using a semi-structured interview schedule as the primary tool for data collection. The analysis, based on frequencies, percentages, and statement scales, provides insights into demographic composition, educational attainment, occupational patterns, income distribution, landholding structures, and welfare scheme access among OBC households. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents belong to the productive age group, with near gender parity and gradual improvements in educational attainment. Livelihoods are dominated by self-employment and farming, while income distribution highlights modest earnings and internal disparities, including the presence of a “creamy layer.” Landholding patterns reflect fragmentation, with small and semi-medium farmers constituting the majority. Welfare schemes such as Rythu Bharosa, disability pensions, Kalyana Laxmi, and mother-child health kits have provided critical support, though gaps in awareness, eligibility, and integration persist. The distribution of scheme benefits across social categories demonstrates that BC households are the primary beneficiaries, while EWS and general households also show significant participation, underscoring the multidimensional nature of vulnerability. The study emphasizes the need for integrated policies that balance immediate welfare support with long-term structural reforms in education, employment, and agriculture. The findings contribute to academic literature and policy discourse, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges in the socio-economic empowerment of OBCs in Telangana.*

**Keywords:** Socio-economic conditions; Other Backward Classes (OBCs); Livelihood patterns; Welfare schemes; Rural development; Telangana

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### **I. Background And Context**

The socio-economic development of marginalized communities has remained a central concern in India’s policy discourse since independence. Among these communities, the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute a significant proportion of the population, contributing substantially to the agrarian economy, informal labour markets, and social fabric of rural India. Despite constitutional safeguards and affirmative action policies, OBCs continue to face structural inequalities in education, employment, and access to resources (Rao, 2021; Deshpande, 2019). Telangana, as one of the youngest states in India, has implemented several welfare schemes aimed at addressing these disparities, yet challenges persist in ensuring equitable distribution and sustainable empowerment (Government of Telangana, 2022).

#### **OBCs in Telangana: Historical and Social Dimensions**

The OBC population in Telangana reflects diverse caste groups traditionally engaged in agriculture, artisanal occupations, and small-scale trade. Historically, these communities have been positioned between upper castes and Scheduled Castes/Tribes, often experiencing relative deprivation in terms of land ownership, education, and political representation (Patel, 2020; Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021). The socio-economic conditions of OBCs are shaped by both caste hierarchies and class dynamics, creating multidimensional vulnerabilities. Scholars argue that while OBCs have benefited from reservation policies, internal stratification and the emergence of a “creamy layer” have complicated debates on equity and inclusion (Sharma & Singh, 2021; Mishra, 2021).

### **Livelihood Conditions and Agrarian Economy**

Agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods in Telangana, with OBC households constituting a large share of small and marginal farmers. Land fragmentation, limited irrigation, and dependence on seasonal crops have constrained productivity and income stability (Agricultural Census, 2022; NABARD, 2023). In Vikarabad district, where this study is situated, OBC households rely heavily on farming, self-employment, and informal labour, reflecting broader patterns of rural livelihood diversification (Rao & Reddy, 2022). Scholars emphasize that while agricultural support schemes such as Rythu Bharosa provide immediate relief, structural reforms in landholding and market access are essential for long-term sustainability (Anveshana, 2025; Patel, 2020).

### **Education and Social Mobility**

Education has been recognized as a critical determinant of upward mobility among marginalized communities. Reservation policies, scholarships, and welfare initiatives have expanded access to education for OBCs, yet disparities persist in quality and attainment (Chaudhary, 2021; Jha, 2022). The presence of postgraduate and doctoral degree holders among respondents in this study reflects emerging aspirations, yet the concentration at lower educational levels underscores persistent barriers such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and social discrimination (Nithyanandam, 2023; Kumar & Rao, 2020). Scholars argue that strengthening educational infrastructure and expanding scholarship coverage are essential for sustaining progress in social mobility (Singh & Patel, 2022).

### **Welfare Schemes and Social Protection**

Telangana has implemented a range of welfare schemes targeting OBCs and other vulnerable groups, including Rythu Bharosa, Kalyana Laxmi, disability pensions, crop loan waivers, and mother-child health kits. These schemes address diverse dimensions of livelihood security, from agriculture and health to social obligations and education (Government of Telangana, 2022; NABARD, 2023). The findings of this study reveal significant outreach, yet disparities in scheme access highlight gaps in awareness, eligibility, and implementation (Vinay, 2025; Hub Sociology Desk, 2025). Scholars emphasize the need for better integration of welfare programs, streamlined delivery mechanisms, and enhanced monitoring to ensure equitable distribution (TeachersBadi, 2025).

## **II. Objectives And Importance Of The Study**

The present study is undertaken with the primary objective of examining the socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana, with special reference to Vikarabad district. The study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the demographic composition, educational attainment, occupational patterns, income distribution, landholding structures, and access to welfare schemes among OBC households. By analysing these dimensions, the research aims to highlight both the progress achieved and the challenges that persist in the socio-economic empowerment of OBCs. The objective is not only to document the current status but also to interpret the implications of these findings for policy and practice. In particular, the study emphasizes the role of welfare schemes such as Rythu Bharosa, Kalyana Laxmi, disability pensions, and scholarships in shaping livelihood security, while also pointing to gaps in coverage and disparities in access. Through this analysis, the study intends to contribute to broader debates on caste, class, and social protection in India, offering insights that are relevant for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in rural development and social justice.

The importance of the study lies in its potential to bridge empirical evidence with policy discourse. OBCs constitute a significant proportion of Telangana's population, yet their socio-economic conditions remain under-researched, particularly at the district level. By focusing on Vikarabad, the study provides localized insights that reflect broader state-level trends while also capturing specific regional dynamics. The findings are significant for academic literature, as they enrich understanding of caste-based inequalities and livelihood strategies in contemporary rural India. They are equally important for policymakers, as they highlight the strengths and weaknesses of welfare interventions and suggest areas for improvement in scheme design and delivery. For practitioners and community organizations, the study underscores the need for integrated approaches that balance immediate welfare support with long-term structural reforms in education, employment, and agriculture. Ultimately, the importance of this research lies in its contribution to inclusive development, equity, and social justice, ensuring that OBC households are not only beneficiaries of welfare but also active participants in Telangana's socio-economic transformation.

## **III. Materials And Methods**

The present study employed a descriptive research design to examine the socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana, with special reference to

Vikarabad district. A descriptive design was chosen because it allows for systematic documentation and interpretation of existing conditions without manipulating variables, thereby providing a realistic picture of the socio-economic status of the respondents (Kumar, 2020; Mishra, 2021). The study was conducted in Vikarabad district, a predominantly agrarian region in Telangana characterized by diverse caste groups and livelihood practices. The district was selected as the study area due to its demographic composition, active participation in welfare schemes, and relevance to broader state-level socio-economic trends. Vikarabad's rural setting provided an appropriate context for analysing the intersection of caste, livelihood, and welfare policies (Rao & Reddy, 2022).

The total sample size comprised 364 respondents, representing OBC households across different villages in the district. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of households engaged in varied occupations, income levels, and welfare scheme participation. The sample size was considered adequate for descriptive analysis, enabling meaningful interpretation of socio-economic patterns (Singh & Patel, 2022). Data were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule, which allowed for both quantitative and qualitative insights. The schedule included questions on demographic characteristics, educational attainment, occupational status, income levels, landholding patterns, and welfare scheme benefits. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide flexibility in probing responses while maintaining consistency across participants (Jha, 2022).

The collected data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, and statement scales, which facilitated clear presentation and interpretation of socio-economic conditions. Frequencies and percentages were employed to summarize demographic and livelihood variables, while statement scales were used to capture perceptions and experiences related to welfare schemes. The analysis was conducted systematically to ensure accuracy and reliability, with interpretations grounded in both empirical findings and relevant literature (Nithyanandam, 2023; NABARD, 2023). The study adhered to ethical principles of social research, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for respondents' perspectives. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that their information would be used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured that the research was conducted with integrity and sensitivity to community contexts (Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021).

## IV. Results

### Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic profile of the respondents offers a comprehensive understanding of the livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana, with special reference to Vikarabad district. The age distribution shows that the majority belong to younger and middle-aged categories, with 44.2 percent between 22 and 30 years and 51.1 percent between 31 and 40 years. This concentration in the productive age group suggests that OBC households are actively engaged in economic activities and consolidating livelihood strategies. Such demographic patterns are consistent with studies highlighting the youthful composition of rural communities in Telangana, where younger generations increasingly diversify beyond traditional agriculture (Rao, 2021; Singh & Patel, 2022). The relatively small proportion above 50 years (4.6 percent) reflects generational shifts in occupational engagement and migration (Kumar, 2020).

Gender distribution reveals near parity, with males at 51.6 percent and females at 47.8 percent, while third gender representation is negligible at 0.5 percent. This balance indicates inclusive participation, though structural inequalities persist. Women in OBC households often face dual burdens of domestic responsibilities and informal labour, limiting access to formal employment (Deshpande, 2019; Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021). Yet, increasing female participation in education and self-employment suggests gradual progress toward gender equity, influenced by welfare schemes and affirmative action (Sharma, 2020; Government of Telangana, 2022).

Educational attainment demonstrates upward mobility. Only 0.8 percent are illiterate, while 25.8 percent reported basic literacy and 30.8 percent completed schooling up to the 10th standard. Notably, 31.6 percent attained higher education, including undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. This reflects the impact of reservation policies and government initiatives aimed at enhancing educational access for marginalized communities (Chaudhary, 2021; Jha, 2022). The presence of postgraduate (9.9 percent) and doctoral degree holders (1.1 percent) is significant, indicating emerging academic aspirations and leadership potential (Nithyanandam, 2023). However, the concentration at lower educational levels underscores persistent challenges such as poverty and limited infrastructure (Kumar & Rao, 2020).

Occupational patterns show that self-employment (39.8 percent) and farming (31.6 percent) dominate livelihood strategies. Business activities account for 19.8 percent, while government and private employment remain limited at 2.2 percent and 3.8 percent, respectively. These findings highlight dependence on informal and semi-formal sectors, consistent with national studies emphasizing OBC marginalization in

formal employment (Mishra, 2021; Das, 2023). The predominance of self-employment reflects adaptive strategies to limited salaried opportunities, while farming underscores the agrarian base of rural livelihoods (Rao & Reddy, 2022).

Income distribution illustrates socio-economic stratification. A majority fall within modest brackets, with 26.4 percent earning between ₹ 1–2.5 lakh annually and 29.4 percent between ₹ 2.5–5 lakh. Only 11.3 percent reported incomes above ₹ 15 lakh, suggesting the presence of a “creamy layer” within the OBC population. This uneven distribution reflects structural inequalities in access to resources and welfare schemes (TeachersBadi, 2025; Sharma & Singh, 2021). Concentration in lower income categories highlights vulnerability to economic shocks and the need for targeted interventions (NABARD, 2023).

Landholding patterns provide further insights. The majority are small and semi-medium farmers, with 34.1 percent holding 2.5–5 acres and 28.6 percent holding 5–10 acres. Marginal farmers constitute 24.7 percent, while medium and large landholders are few. This reflects the fragmented agrarian structure of Telangana, where small and marginal farmers dominate (Agricultural Census, 2022). Land fragmentation has been identified as a major constraint on productivity and sustainable livelihoods (Anveshana, 2025; Reddy, 2021).

Taken together, the socio-economic profile of OBCs in Vikarabad reveals a community characterized by youthful demographics, near gender balance, gradual educational advancement, and reliance on self-employment and farming. Income disparities and land fragmentation remain critical challenges, underscoring the need for inclusive policies that address structural inequalities. These findings resonate with broader literature on caste, livelihoods, and rural development in India, highlighting both progress and persistent barriers in the socio-economic empowerment of OBCs (Rao, 2021; Mishra, 2021; NABARD, 2023).

### **Scheme Benefits**

The analysis of welfare schemes accessed by respondents provides valuable insights into the extent and nature of state support among the OBC population in Telangana, particularly in Vikarabad district. The data reveal that a significant proportion of households have benefited from diverse schemes, reflecting both the reach of government interventions and the socio-economic vulnerabilities of the community. Among the respondents, the largest share reported access to Rythu Bharosa (20.1 percent), a flagship agricultural support program designed to provide financial assistance to farmers (Katherasala, and Bheenaveni, 2024). This high level of participation underscores the continued dependence of OBC households on agriculture and the importance of direct income support in sustaining rural livelihoods (Rao, 2021; NABARD, 2023). The scheme’s prominence also highlights the state’s prioritization of agrarian welfare, consistent with broader studies on Telangana’s rural development policies (Patel, 2020; Reddy, 2021).

Another notable finding is the substantial proportion of respondents benefiting from disability pensions (19.5 percent). This figure suggests that a considerable segment of the OBC population faces health-related vulnerabilities, necessitating social protection measures. Disability pensions have been recognized as critical instruments for ensuring minimum income security and reducing exclusion among marginalized groups (Sharma, 2020; Jha, 2022). The relatively high uptake of this scheme in Vikarabad reflects both the demographic realities of the region and the effectiveness of welfare outreach mechanisms (Government of Telangana, 2022).

The Kalyana Laxmi scheme, which provides financial assistance for marriage expenses, was accessed by 17.3 percent of respondents. This indicates the socio-cultural significance of marriage support programs in reducing financial burdens on OBC families. Scholars have noted that such schemes play a dual role: alleviating immediate economic stress while also reinforcing social inclusion by addressing caste-based disadvantages in matrimonial practices (Deshpande, 2019; Chaudhary, 2021). The relatively high participation in this scheme highlights the intersection of economic and cultural dimensions in welfare policy.

Health-related interventions also feature prominently, with 13.2 percent of respondents reporting benefits from mother and child health kits. This reflects the state’s emphasis on maternal and child welfare, which has been identified as a critical determinant of long-term socio-economic development (Singh & Patel, 2022; Kumar, 2020). Access to such schemes suggests that OBC households are increasingly integrated into public health initiatives, though disparities in healthcare infrastructure remain a challenge (Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021).

Other schemes such as crop loan waivers (7.7 percent), old-age pensions (7.1 percent), and housing schemes (3 percent) further illustrate the diversity of welfare measures accessed by the community. Crop loan waivers highlight the indebtedness of small and marginal farmers, a recurring issue in Telangana’s agrarian economy (Das, 2023; Mishra, 2021). Old-age pensions provide critical support for elderly OBC members, ensuring basic income security in the absence of formal retirement benefits (Sharma & Singh, 2021). Housing

schemes, though accessed by a smaller proportion, reflect ongoing efforts to address shelter insecurity among marginalized households (Anveshana, 2025).

Interestingly, scholarships were reported by 3.6 percent of respondents, indicating limited but important access to educational support. While the proportion appears modest, it underscores the role of scholarships in enabling upward mobility among OBC youth, particularly in higher education (Nithyanandam, 2023; Chaifry, 2025). The relatively low participation may reflect barriers such as lack of awareness, bureaucratic hurdles, or limited eligibility criteria, issues frequently documented in studies of welfare implementation (Kumar & Rao, 2020).

Smaller proportions accessed schemes such as BC Bandhu (1.9 percent) and caste occupation-based programs (2.5 percent). These schemes are designed to support traditional occupations and entrepreneurial activities among backward classes, yet their limited reach suggests challenges in implementation and awareness (Vinay, 2025; Hub Sociology Desk, 2025). The negligible representation of households benefiting from combined schemes further indicates that multiple scheme access remains rare, reflecting either restrictive eligibility or limited integration of welfare programs (TeachersBadi, 2025).

Taken together, the scheme benefit analysis highlights the multidimensional nature of welfare support among OBC households in Vikarabad. Agricultural assistance, pensions, marriage support, health interventions, and educational scholarships collectively shape the socio-economic landscape of the community. While the data demonstrate significant outreach, they also reveal gaps in coverage and disparities in scheme access. These findings resonate with broader literature on welfare policies in India, which emphasizes both the transformative potential of targeted schemes and the persistent challenges of equitable distribution (Rao, 2021; NABARD, 2023; Mishra, 2021).

**Table No: 1. Scheme benefited by you or your family members**

Statements	N	%
RythuBharosa and Caste occupation-based scheme	5	1.4
Scholarships	13	3.6
Disable Pension	71	19.5
RythuBharosa, Crop Loan waive and Scholarships	2	.5
Old age Pension	26	7.1
Kalyana Laxmi	63	17.3
BC Bandhu and Scholarships	2	.5
BC Bandhu	7	1.9
BC Bandhu and Oldage Pension	2	.5
RythuBharosa	73	20.1
Caste Occupation based scheme	9	2.5
Crop Loan waive	28	7.7
Housing scheme and Scholarships	4	1.1
Mother child health kits	48	13.2
Housing scheme	11	3.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Scheme Benefits and Social Status

The distribution of welfare scheme benefits across different social categories provides a nuanced picture of how state interventions reach diverse segments of the population in Vikarabad district. The data reveal that Backward Classes (BCs) constitute the largest share of beneficiaries, accounting for 168 out of 364 respondents. This predominance reflects the targeted nature of many welfare programs, which are designed to address the socio-economic vulnerabilities of OBC and BC households. The high participation of BCs in schemes such as Rythu Bharosa (34 beneficiaries), Kalyana Laxmi (27 beneficiaries), and mother-child health kits (29 beneficiaries) underscores the centrality of these interventions in supporting agrarian livelihoods, social obligations, and health security (Rao, 2021; NABARD, 2023).

Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) also feature prominently, with 104 beneficiaries across different schemes. Their significant representation in disability pensions (29 beneficiaries), old-age pensions (10 beneficiaries), and Rythu Bharosa (18 beneficiaries) highlights the intersection of economic vulnerability and social status. Scholars have noted that EWS households, though not always categorized by caste, often face similar challenges of poverty, limited landholding, and restricted access to formal employment (Sharma, 2020; Jha, 2022). The data suggest that welfare schemes are increasingly inclusive of EWS populations, reflecting policy shifts toward broader social protection (Government of Telangana, 2022).

General category households, though traditionally perceived as less dependent on welfare, also report significant participation, with 64 beneficiaries. Their access to schemes such as Rythu Bharosa (15 beneficiaries), Kalyana Laxmi (14 beneficiaries), and disability pensions (13 beneficiaries) indicates that economic vulnerability transcends caste boundaries. This finding resonates with recent debates on the extension of welfare benefits to economically weaker groups within the general category, challenging

assumptions of privilege and highlighting the need for nuanced policy frameworks (Deshpande, 2019; Patel, 2020).

Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs), though smaller in number, also appear in the distribution. ST households reported access to Rythu Bharosa (6 beneficiaries), Kalyana Laxmi (5 beneficiaries), and crop loan waivers (3 beneficiaries), reflecting their dependence on agrarian support and social welfare programs. SC households, though only 8 in total, accessed disability pensions (6 beneficiaries) and crop loan waivers (2 beneficiaries), underscoring their continued vulnerability in both health and agriculture. These findings align with broader literature on caste-based disparities in welfare access, where SC and ST households often face structural barriers despite targeted schemes (Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021; Mishra, 2021).

The distribution of specific schemes across social categories reveals important patterns. Disability pensions are widely accessed across groups, with 71 beneficiaries, including 29 from EWS, 21 from BCs, and 13 from the general category. This suggests that health vulnerabilities cut across caste lines, necessitating inclusive welfare measures (Singh & Patel, 2022). Similarly, Kalyana Laxmi benefits are spread across categories, with 27 BCs, 17 EWS, and 14 general households, reflecting the socio-cultural importance of marriage support across communities (Chaudhary, 2021). Rythu Bharosa, the most prominent scheme, is accessed by 73 households, including 34 BCs, 18 EWS, and 15 general households, highlighting its role as a cornerstone of agrarian welfare (NABARD, 2023).

Smaller schemes such as BC Bandhu, caste occupation-based programs, and housing schemes show limited reach, with only a handful of beneficiaries across categories. This limited participation may reflect challenges in awareness, eligibility, or implementation, issues frequently documented in studies of welfare delivery (Vinay, 2025; Hub Sociology Desk, 2025). The negligible representation of households accessing multiple schemes simultaneously further suggests that integration of welfare programs remains weak, limiting the potential for comprehensive support (TeachersBadi, 2025).

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that welfare schemes in Vikarabad reach across social categories, though with varying intensity. BC households emerge as the primary beneficiaries, reflecting both their numerical strength and targeted policy focus. EWS and general households also show significant participation, challenging traditional caste-based assumptions about welfare dependence. ST and SC households, though fewer in number, highlight the continued importance of targeted interventions for marginalized groups. These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of welfare distribution, where caste, class, and economic vulnerability intersect to shape access to state support. The results resonate with broader scholarship on social protection in India, emphasizing both the transformative potential of welfare schemes and the persistent challenges of equitable distribution (Rao, 2021; Sharma, 2020; NABARD, 2023).

**Table No: 2. Scheme benefited by you or your family members Vs Social Status**

Scheme benefited by you or your family members	Social Status					Total
	General	EWS	BC	ST	SC	
Rythu Bharosa and Caste occupation-based scheme	3	0	2	0	0	5
Scholarships	3	0	10	0	0	13
Disable Pension	13	29	21	2	6	71
Rythu Bharosa, Crop Loan waive and Scholarships	0	0	2	0	0	2
Oldage Pension	4	10	12	0	0	26
Kalyana Laxmi	14	17	27	5	0	63
BC Bandhu and Scholarships	2	0	0	0	0	2
BC Bandhu	2	2	3	0	0	7
BC Bandhu and Old age Pension	0	0	0	2	0	2
Rythu Bharosa	15	18	34	6	0	73
Caste Occupation based scheme	0	2	7	0	0	9
Crop Loan waive	3	9	11	3	2	28
Housing scheme and Scholarships	0	0	4	0	0	4
Mother child helath kits	4	13	29	2	0	48
Housing scheme	1	4	6	0	0	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>364</b>

## V. Discussion

The socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana, with special reference to Vikarabad district, reveal a complex interplay of demographic, educational, occupational, and welfare dynamics. The findings highlight both progress and persistent challenges, underscoring the need for nuanced policy interventions.

The youthful demographic profile of respondents suggests a community in transition, with younger generations actively engaged in livelihood pursuits. This is consistent with broader demographic trends in rural India, where younger populations are increasingly diversifying their occupational choices beyond agriculture (Rao, 2021; Singh & Patel, 2022). While this demographic advantage offers potential for innovation and entrepreneurship, it also raises concerns about underemployment and migration pressures. Scholars argue that without adequate skill development and access to formal employment, youthful populations may remain trapped in cycles of informal labour (Kumar, 2020; Mishra, 2021).

Gender distribution shows near parity, which is encouraging in terms of inclusive participation. However, structural inequalities persist, with women often concentrated in informal and unpaid labour (Deshpande, 2019; Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021). The increasing female participation in education and self-employment reflects gradual progress, yet barriers such as patriarchal norms, limited mobility, and wage disparities remain significant (Sharma, 2020). Addressing these challenges requires gender-sensitive policies, including targeted skill training, microfinance support, and enhanced representation in formal employment sectors (Government of Telangana, 2022).

Educational attainment demonstrates upward mobility, with a notable proportion of respondents achieving higher education. This reflects the impact of reservation policies and welfare initiatives aimed at enhancing access for marginalized communities (Chaudhary, 2021; Jha, 2022). However, the concentration of respondents at lower educational levels highlights persistent barriers such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and social discrimination (Kumar & Rao, 2020). Scholars emphasize that while access has improved, quality of education remains uneven, particularly in rural areas (Nithyanandam, 2023). Strengthening educational infrastructure, improving teacher quality, and expanding scholarship coverage are critical for sustaining upward mobility.

Occupational patterns reveal dependence on self-employment and farming, consistent with national studies on OBC livelihoods (Das, 2023; Rao & Reddy, 2022). While diversification into business activities is evident, limited representation in government and private employment underscores structural exclusion from formal sectors (Mishra, 2021). This exclusion reflects both systemic barriers and limited access to competitive skills. Scholars argue that enhancing vocational training, promoting entrepreneurship, and expanding affirmative action in employment are essential for bridging these gaps (Patel, 2020).

Income distribution illustrates socio-economic stratification, with most respondents concentrated in modest income brackets. The presence of a “creamy layer” within the OBC population highlights internal disparities, consistent with debates on the need to refine reservation policies (Sharma & Singh, 2021; TeachersBadi, 2025). While welfare schemes provide some relief, structural inequalities in access to markets, credit, and technology continue to constrain income growth (NABARD, 2023). Addressing these disparities requires targeted interventions such as inclusive credit policies, cooperative farming models, and market linkages for small producers (Reddy, 2021).

Landholding patterns further underscore agrarian vulnerabilities. The predominance of small and semi-medium farmers reflects the fragmented agrarian structure of Telangana (Agricultural Census, 2022). Land fragmentation has been identified as a major constraint on productivity and income stability (Anveshana, 2025). Scholars argue that consolidation of landholdings, promotion of collective farming, and adoption of modern agricultural practices are critical for enhancing productivity (Patel, 2020). Moreover, access to irrigation, crop insurance, and sustainable farming technologies remains essential for reducing agrarian distress (Rao, 2021).

The analysis of welfare schemes reveals significant outreach, with programs such as Rythu Bharosa, disability pensions, Kalyana Laxmi, and mother-child health kits playing central roles. These schemes address diverse dimensions of livelihood security, from agriculture and health to social obligations (NABARD, 2023; Sharma, 2020). However, disparities in scheme access highlight gaps in awareness, eligibility, and implementation (Vinay, 2025; Hub Sociology Desk, 2025). The limited participation in scholarships and occupation-based schemes suggests that educational and occupational support remains inadequate. Scholars emphasize the need for better integration of welfare programs, streamlined delivery mechanisms, and enhanced monitoring to ensure equitable distribution (TeachersBadi, 2025).

The cross-tabulation of scheme benefits and social status reveals that BC households are the primary beneficiaries, reflecting both numerical strength and targeted policy focus. EWS and general households also show significant participation, challenging traditional assumptions about welfare dependence (Deshpande, 2019; Patel, 2020). ST and SC households, though fewer in number, highlight the continued importance of targeted interventions for marginalized groups (Reddy & Lakshmi, 2021; Mishra, 2021). These findings underscore the multidimensional nature of welfare distribution, where caste, class, and economic vulnerability intersect to shape access. Scholars argue that inclusive welfare policies must balance caste-based targeting with economic vulnerability criteria to ensure comprehensive coverage (Singh & Patel, 2022).

In terms of strengths, the study highlights progress in educational attainment, gender participation, and welfare outreach. These reflect the positive impact of state policies and community resilience. However, weaknesses such as income disparities, land fragmentation, limited formal employment, and uneven scheme access remain significant. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach: strengthening educational infrastructure, promoting skill development, enhancing access to credit and markets, consolidating landholdings, and integrating welfare programs.

The discussion also points to broader implications for policy and practice. The findings resonate with national debates on affirmative action, welfare targeting, and rural development. Scholars emphasize that while welfare schemes provide immediate relief, sustainable empowerment requires structural reforms in education, employment, and agriculture (Rao, 2021; NABARD, 2023). Moreover, community participation, transparency, and accountability in welfare delivery are critical for ensuring effectiveness (Sharma, 2020).

## **VI. Conclusion**

The present study on the socio-economic and livelihood conditions of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Telangana, with special reference to Vikarabad district, highlights both the progress achieved and the challenges that persist. The findings reveal a youthful demographic actively engaged in self-employment and farming, with gradual improvements in educational attainment and gender participation. Welfare schemes such as Rythu Bharosa, disability pensions, Kalyana Laxmi, and mother-child health kits have provided critical support, reflecting the state's commitment to social protection. However, disparities in income distribution, land fragmentation, and limited access to formal employment continue to constrain sustainable empowerment.

The analysis of welfare benefits across social categories demonstrates that while BC households remain the primary beneficiaries, economically weaker sections and general category households also significantly access state support, underscoring the multidimensional nature of vulnerability. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, though fewer in number, highlight the continued importance of targeted interventions.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for integrated policies that balance immediate welfare support with long-term structural reforms in education, employment, and agriculture. Strengthening institutional delivery, enhancing awareness, and promoting inclusive development are essential for ensuring that OBC households achieve sustainable socio-economic progress and contribute meaningfully to Telangana's rural transformation.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study. The research was carried out solely for academic purposes, with impartiality and integrity maintained throughout the process.

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