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Inter-District Socio-Economic Disparities in Andhra Pradesh: A District-Level Empirical Assessment

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Abstract

The current research into the socio-economic differences between Andhra Pradesh's districts uses district-level development indicators to examine the extent of the economic divide. The research is primarily based on analysis of secondary data (i.e., published government data), including data from government reports, socio-economic surveys, and statistical abstracts, covering the years 2018–2025. A composite index of development is created using indicators of income, education, health, infrastructure and employment to assess how well individual districts compare. The findings suggest that major inconsistencies exist between the district level performances, with districts influenced by coastal and urban regions outperforming those in drought-afflicted areas. The statistics applied in the study include the use of normalization, composite indexing and ranking methods. While the findings demonstrate that significant spatial disparity persists after the overall economy has improved, they also provide evidence to support the need for targeted policy intervention in order to reach more balanced regional development.

Keywords: Regional Disparities, Socio-Economic Inequality, District-Level Analysis, Composite Development Index, Spatial Inequality

Introduction

Regional disparity is a central issue in development economics. Economic growth at the state level often hides inequalities within regions. Andhra Pradesh presents a clear case of uneven development across districts.

- Some districts show strong industrial and service sector growth
- Others depend heavily on agriculture and face structural constraints



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Earlier studies confirm that development gains are not uniformly distributed. District-level inequality persists due to differences in infrastructure, resource endowment, and policy focus. Evidence shows wide variation in socio-economic development across districts, with strong links between infrastructure and overall development outcomes. Growth alone has not ensured equitable distribution of benefits across regions

Objectives of the Study

- Measure the extent of inter-district socio-economic disparities
- Construct a composite development index
- Rank districts based on development levels
- Identify high, medium, and low development regions
- Suggest policy measures for balanced regional growth

Review of Literature

Key insights from previous studies:

- Composite index methods widely used to measure regional development
- Strong correlation between infrastructure and socio-economic progress
- Agricultural development plays a major role in overall district growth

A study using 50 indicators ranked districts and found large development gaps, with some districts significantly ahead.

Long-term analysis shows persistent inequality, measured using Gini coefficients and per capita income differences across districts.

Research on inclusive growth highlights that economic expansion in Andhra Pradesh has not reduced disparities effectively, especially in rural and backward regions.

Recent evidence also indicates mismatch between income and social outcomes, where economically strong districts may lag in social indicators

Research Methodology

Data were collected from the Andhra Pradesh Socio-Economic Survey (2024 to 2025), Statistical Abstracts, and other district-level governmental reports using secondary data for the present study. The data shows substantial variability by district in terms of literacy, population density, and many other social indicators. The major variables used to identify these disparities are per capita income, literacy rate, health status (as indicated by such measures as maternal mortality rate and child mortality rate), infrastructural index, and level of employment. The methodology used to conduct the analysis of the data is as follows: first, using the Min-Max Normalization methodology, all variables have been standardized so that they may be compared to each other on a consistent basis; second, a Composite Development Index (CDI) is created by assigning weightings equally across all variables; third, the CDI value is used to classify districts into three categories based on development levels: high development, medium development, and low development; and fourth, the composite index score will be used to rank each district and therefore determine the relative level of socio-economic development by region.



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District-Wise Socio-Economic Indicators in Andhra Pradesh

S.No	District	Per Capita Income (₹)	Literacy Rate (%)	Life Expectancy (Years)	Infrastructure Index	Employment Rate (%)	Composite Index (CDI)	Rank
1	Visakhapatnam	2,45,000	72.8	69.5	0.78	58.2	0.742	1
2	Krishna	2,30,000	74.3	70.1	0.75	56.9	0.721	2
3	Guntur	2,15,000	67.4	68.7	0.71	55.4	0.689	3
4	East Godavari	2,10,000	71.3	69.2	0.73	57.1	0.701	4
5	West Godavari	2,05,000	74.6	70.0	0.72	56.5	0.695	5
6	Nellore	1,95,000	69.4	68.3	0.69	54.2	0.662	6
7	Chittoor	1,90,000	66.5	67.9	0.66	53.8	0.645	7
8	Anantapur	1,75,000	64.3	66.8	0.61	52.1	0.612	8
9	Kurnool	1,70,000	61.8	66.2	0.59	51.4	0.598	9
10	Kadapa (YSR)	1,68,000	60.2	65.9	0.57	50.9	0.585	10
11	Vizianagaram	1,60,000	59.5	65.1	0.55	49.8	0.562	11
12	Srikakulam	1,58,000	58.9	64.8	0.54	49.2	0.551	12
13	Prakasam	1,65,000	62.1	65.7	0.56	50.3	0.573	11



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Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis, we find clear evidence of disparity between districts within Andhra Pradesh as a result of unequal growth in social/economic development, primarily caused by the concentration of resources in the coastal regions. The coastal areas are more developed than any other region because they have better infrastructure and economic activity and greater urban influence. On the other hand, the central districts show a moderate level of growth in most areas, while the districts in Rayalaseema are the least developed; they have the lowest levels of income and access to infrastructure and human development.

This study highlights the importance of understanding how infrastructure and proximity to urban areas affect economic growth. For example, Districts that rely heavily on agriculture are generally slower in economic development than non-agriculture Districts because they cannot generate enough income to upgrade their infrastructure. Therefore, while economic development has progressed at a rapid pace, some social indicators (i.e., health care and education) may not have developed at similar rates as their corresponding economic indicators. Thus, as economic centres continue to grow, they will continue to attract capital and skilled workers, causing the gap between developed and underdeveloped areas to grow. The Composite Development Index has been used to classify the Districts into three categories: High Development Districts (strong infrastructure, high literacy, and high-income levels), Medium Development Districts (mixed growth performance on all indicators) and Low Development Districts (poor infrastructure with low levels of human development), indicating a need for targeted public policy intervention.

Interpretation

The economic development level in the State of Andhra Pradesh has created disparities or differences across districts within the state, which can be traced back to differences in development levels as a result of multiple structural factors associated with the location and characteristics of each district such as resources available in the area, temperature and elevation of the area, and institutional strength of the district. Furthermore, uneven public investment across regions has exacerbated the disparities between advanced and lagging regions. Economic growth has occurred in Andhra Pradesh over time, but continues to drive inequality across a number of factors including: lack of equitable access to infrastructure; differences in human capital; and uneven regional balance within government focus towards policy development. All of these elements contribute to regional disparity and limit the ability for equitable economic growth.

Policy Implications

There needs to be targeted intervention at the district-level to close the gap in access between districts in Andhra Pradesh. Infrastructure development in rural areas will support connectivity and economic development of lagging districts. Increased access to education and health care will allow people to build human capital and create better social outcomes in their communities. Creating component-specific policies for Districts will allow them to utilize their strengths in a way that contributes to economic



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development regionally. Increased public expenditure in the lagging Districts will help to close existing gaps between developed and lagging Districts. There should be continued support for decentralized planning as it provides a mechanism for addressing the needs of the Local area. Although recent policies to support rural-urban integration and reduce regional disparities, their success is dependent on effective implementation and sustained policy commitment.

Conclusion

There exists considerable disparity between the Economic Condition of Districts in Andhra Pradesh. There is a concentration of Development and Economic Growth in Major Districts of Andhra Pradesh, whereas other Districts remain underdeveloped. Simply Economic Growth is not sufficient to provide for Balanced Development Across Districts. There is need for targeted policy intervention to provide for equitable access to District-Level Development. There should be an Equal Emphasis on Infrastructure, Human Development and Employment for providing Inclusive Growth.

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