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Impact of Public Policies on Dalits in Hanumakonda District, Telangana: A Study

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Abstract

Public policies play a significant role in promoting social justice, reducing socio-economic inequalities, and improving the living conditions of historically marginalised communities. In Telangana, various welfare initiatives are intended to promote educational advancement, employment opportunities, economic empowerment, housing security, and social protection among Scheduled Castes. The present study examines the impact of public policies on Dalit households in Hanumakonda district, Telangana, with particular attention to policy awareness, access to welfare schemes, utilisation of benefits, perceived socio-economic changes, and implementation barriers. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design the dataset of 60 respondents to demonstrate primary-data analysis. The proposed framework covers educational assistance, economic support, employment-related opportunities, housing, and social welfare programmes. The results indicate that awareness, accessibility, and receipt of benefits should be examined separately when evaluating policy effectiveness. The article also considers the role of administrative procedures, documentation requirements, information gaps, and beneficiary participation in shaping policy outcomes. It recommends strengthening village-level awareness programmes, improving application assistance, monitoring beneficiary outcomes, and establishing accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms. The study emphasises that the effectiveness of public policy must be assessed through measurable improvements in living conditions, social inclusion, and access to constitutional entitlements.

Keywords: Public Policy, Dalits, Scheduled Castes, Social Justice, Welfare Schemes, Economic Empowerment, Telangana, Hanumakonda District.

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Introduction

Public policy is an important instrument through which governments seek to address social inequalities, promote inclusive development, and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. In a democratic welfare state, public policies are expected to respond to the needs of disadvantaged communities and provide institutional support for improving their educational, economic, social, and political conditions. In India, policies concerning Scheduled Castes have developed within a constitutional framework that emphasises equality, dignity, non-discrimination, and social justice.

Dalits have historically experienced caste-based exclusion, occupational disadvantages, unequal access to educational opportunities, and restrictions on social mobility. Although constitutional safeguards and welfare programmes have created opportunities for advancement, inequalities may continue through differences in access to resources, institutional support, information, and employment. Consequently, an assessment of public policies requires attention not only to their objectives but also to the extent to which eligible beneficiaries can access and utilise the provisions intended for them.

In Telangana, the Scheduled Castes Development Department focuses on educational advancement, socio-economic development, welfare, and protection. Its areas of intervention include economic support, educational assistance, reservation-related measures, and housing-site assistance. The state also operates a Scheduled Castes Special Development Fund framework intended to direct public resources towards the development of Scheduled Castes. These initiatives provide an important institutional context for examining the relationship between public policy and socio-economic development.

Hanumakonda district provides a relevant setting for studying these issues because its population includes substantial Scheduled Caste communities with diverse educational, occupational, and economic backgrounds. The 2011 Census-based Telangana Statistical Abstract records 208,419 Scheduled Caste residents in Hanumakonda under the district boundaries used in that publication. This historical figure provides background context rather than a current population estimate.

The impact of public policy cannot be understood solely through the number of schemes announced or the expenditure incurred. It is necessary to examine whether people know about the schemes, understand eligibility requirements, complete application procedures, receive the intended benefits, and experience improvements in their daily lives. For example, educational assistance may support continued schooling, while economic assistance may help eligible households develop productive assets or livelihood activities. However, the outcomes may depend on the adequacy of assistance, timely delivery, access to markets, administrative efficiency, and the circumstances of individual households.

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The distinction between policy provision and policy outcomes is particularly important in the study of marginalised communities. A scheme may exist formally, yet some eligible households may remain unaware of it or encounter difficulties in obtaining documentation and completing applications. Similarly, receipt of financial assistance does not necessarily establish sustained economic empowerment unless the assistance contributes to improved income, employment, or livelihood security.

Against this background, the present study examines public policies affecting Dalit households in Hanumakonda district. It focuses on policy awareness, access to welfare programmes, educational and economic opportunities, perceived changes in living conditions, and administrative barriers. The study adopts a sociological and public-policy perspective to identify areas where implementation can be strengthened and public expenditure can be made more responsive to beneficiary needs.

Review of Literature

1. **Waghray, Debora, and Kiran (2022),** in their conference paper *A Study on Policy of Telangana Government for Promotion and Development of Dalit Entrepreneurs*, examined government policy initiatives intended to promote Dalit entrepreneurship in Telangana. The paper focused on the challenges faced by Dalit entrepreneurs and the role of government interventions in supporting their development. This work is relevant to the present study because economic empowerment is an important dimension of public policy for Scheduled Castes. Entrepreneurial assistance, access to financial resources, institutional support, and opportunities for self-employment can contribute to livelihood development and social mobility.
2. **Government of Telangana (2024)**, through its *Socio-Economic Outlook 2024,* discusses the Scheduled Castes Special Development Fund and other welfare initiatives. The report provides an official policy context for examining public allocations, development interventions, and the relationship between government expenditure and the welfare of Scheduled Caste communities. It is useful for comparing household experiences with broader policy objectives.
3. **Karunakar (2019)** examined the integrated development initiatives of the Telangana Scheduled Castes Development Department, particularly those relating to education. The article discusses educational assistance, hostels, scholarships, residential educational institutions, and other interventions intended to improve educational opportunities among Scheduled Caste students. It provides a relevant basis for examining how educational policies contribute to social mobility and human development.

Objectives of the Study

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1. To examine awareness of public policies and welfare schemes among Dalit households in Hanumakonda district.
2. To assess access to and utilisation of educational, economic, employment, housing, and social protection schemes.
3. To examine the perceived impact of public policies on the socio-economic conditions of Dalit households.
4. To identify administrative, informational, economic, and social barriers affecting access to welfare benefits.
5. To examine the association between policy awareness and utilisation of welfare schemes.
6. To suggest measures for improving the effectiveness and accessibility of public policies for Dalit communities.

Research Methodology

Research Design: The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

Study area: Hanumakonda district, Telangana.

Proposed sample size: 60 respondents belonging to Scheduled Caste households.

Sampling technique: Purposive sampling is proposed for identifying respondents who can provide information about awareness and access to welfare programmes. A clearly defined household-selection procedure should be followed in actual fieldwork.

Sources of data: Primary data should be collected through a structured interview schedule covering socio-demographic characteristics, policy awareness, applications, benefit receipt, perceived outcomes, and implementation barriers. Secondary information may be obtained from government reports, official scheme guidelines, academic publications, and relevant legislation.

Data Tabulation and Analysis

Table 1. Age-wise Distribution of Respondents:

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
18–30 years	14	23.3
31–40 years	18	30.0
41–50 years	16	26.7
Above 50 years	12	20.0
Total	**60**	**100.0**

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Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that the largest proportion of respondents (30.0%) belongs to the 31–40 years age group, followed by 26.7% in the 41–50 years age group. Together, 56.7% of respondents are between 31 and 50 years of age. This indicates that the study largely represents adults in their productive years who may have significant needs relating to employment, income generation, housing, education, and social security. Therefore, welfare policies should respond to the socio-economic needs of different age groups.

Table 2. Educational Status of Respondents:

Educational status	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
No formal education	10	16.7
Primary education	14	23.3
Secondary education	18	30.0
Intermediate	10	16.7
Degree and above	8	13.3
Total	**60**	**100.0**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that 30.0% of respondents have secondary education, while 23.3% have primary education. Furthermore, 16.7% have no formal education, whereas only 13.3% possess a degree or higher qualification. These findings indicate that higher educational attainment is relatively limited among the surveyed respondents. Limited educational qualifications may make it more difficult for some households to understand eligibility conditions, complete application procedures, and access online welfare services. Hence, public authorities should provide simple information, local guidance, and educational support to improve access to welfare schemes.

Table 3. Occupational Status of Respondents:

Occupation	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Agriculture	12	20.0
Daily wage labour	18	30.0
Self-employment	10	16.7
Salaried employment	8	13.3
Homemakers and other unpaid household work	12	20.0
Total	**60**	**100.0**

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Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that daily wage labour is the most common occupation, accounting for 30.0% of respondents. Agriculture accounts for 20.0%, while another 20.0% are homemakers or engaged in other unpaid household work. Self-employment represents 16.7%, whereas salaried employment accounts for only 13.3%. The combined share of daily wage labour and agriculture is 50.0%, indicating that half of the respondents depend on these forms of work. This occupational pattern highlights the importance of employment security, skill development, livelihood assistance, and social protection. Welfare policies should also consider the irregular incomes and practical difficulties faced by households dependent on daily wages.

Table 4. Awareness of Public Policies and Welfare Schemes:

Level of awareness	Frequency	Percentage
High	8	13.3
Moderate	14	23.3
Low	25	41.7
Very low	13	21.7
Total	**60**	**100.0**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that 41.7% of respondents have low awareness of public policies and welfare schemes, while 21.7% have very low awareness. Thus, 63.4% of respondents fall into the low or very low awareness categories, compared with only 13.3% who report high awareness. This substantial difference highlights an important information gap among the surveyed Dalit households. The existence of welfare schemes alone may not ensure that eligible households benefit from them if information about eligibility, entitlements, application procedures, and deadlines does not reach them. Therefore, regular village-level awareness programmes, community outreach, and assistance through local administrative institutions are necessary to strengthen effective access to public policies.

Table 5. Access to and Utilisation of Government Welfare Schemes

Scheme or policy area	Respondents reporting benefit receipt	Percentage of 60 respondents
Educational scholarships or assistance	18	30.0
Economic assistance or self-employment support	12	20.0

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Employment-related assistance or skill development	10	16.7
Housing or house-site assistance	14	23.3
Social protection and other eligible welfare benefits	20	33.3

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that social protection and other eligible welfare benefits were reported by 33.3% of respondents, followed by educational scholarships or assistance at 30.0%. Housing or house-site assistance accounted for 23.3%, while economic assistance or self-employment support accounted for 20.0%. Employment-related assistance and skill development recorded the lowest reported proportion at 16.7%. These findings indicate differences in reported benefit receipt across the major welfare categories. In particular, the comparatively lower reporting of employment-related assistance points to a need to examine awareness, eligibility, availability, and application barriers affecting access to livelihood programmes. The findings also suggest that welfare delivery should address not only immediate social protection needs but also the longer-term economic empowerment of Dalit households. Since respondents may receive multiple benefits, these percentages represent scheme-wise reporting and should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive categories.

Table 6. Perceived Impact of Public Policies on Household Conditions

Dimension	Improved	No major change	Deteriorated
Educational opportunities	30 (50.0%)	25 (41.7%)	5 (8.3%)
Employment opportunities	22 (36.7%)	30 (50.0%)	8 (13.3%)
Household income	24 (40.0%)	27 (45.0%)	9 (15.0%)
Housing and basic amenities	28 (46.7%)	25 (41.7%)	7 (11.7%)
Access to social protection	32 (53.3%)	22 (36.7%)	6 (10.0%)

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that the highest proportion of respondents reported improvement in access to social protection (53.3%), followed by educational opportunities

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(50.0%) and housing and basic amenities (46.7%). However, only 40.0% reported improvement in household income, while 36.7% reported improvement in employment opportunities. Notably, 50.0% observed no major change in employment opportunities, and 45.0% reported no major change in household income. These findings suggest that respondents perceive welfare policies as contributing more visibly to social protection and educational access than to employment and income improvement. This distinction is important because access to welfare benefits does not necessarily translate into sustained economic advancement. Public policy implementation should therefore combine social assistance with skill development, employment opportunities, livelihood support, and measures that promote stable household incomes. These results represent respondents' perceptions and do not independently establish that welfare schemes caused the reported changes.

Table 7. Perceived Effectiveness of Government Welfare Programmes

Level of perceived effectiveness	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Very effective	8	13.3
Effective	18	30.0
Moderately effective	20	33.3
Less effective	10	16.7
Not effective	4	6.7
Total	**60**	**100.0**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that 33.3% of respondents consider government welfare programmes moderately effective, while 30.0% consider them effective and 13.3% consider them very effective. In contrast, 16.7% regard the programmes as less effective, and 6.7% consider them ineffective. Overall, 43.3% rate the programmes as effective or very effective, whereas 23.4% consider them less effective or ineffective. The findings indicate that respondents recognise benefits from welfare programmes, but positive assessments are not universal. The sizeable proportion reporting only moderate effectiveness suggests scope to improve the consistency, timeliness, accessibility, and responsiveness of service delivery. Evaluating beneficiary experiences, reducing procedural difficulties, and ensuring transparent implementation may help strengthen public confidence in welfare programmes.

Table 8. Major Barriers to Accessing Public Policies

Major barrier	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Lack of information	14	23.3

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Documentation difficulties	10	16.7
Delays in processing applications	12	20.0
Difficulty accessing online services	8	13.3
Inadequate assistance from implementing agencies	9	15.0
Unclear eligibility requirements	7	11.7
Total	**60**	**100.0**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that lack of information is the most frequently reported barrier, accounting for 23.3% of respondents. Delays in processing applications follow at 20.0%, while documentation difficulties account for 16.7%. Inadequate assistance from implementing agencies represents 15.0%, difficulty accessing online services accounts for 13.3%, and unclear eligibility requirements account for 11.7%. Together, lack of information and delays in processing applications represent 43.3% of the reported barriers. This indicates that both communication gaps and administrative delays are important challenges in accessing welfare benefits. Furthermore, documentation requirements and online-service difficulties may create additional obstacles for households requiring practical assistance. These findings underline the need for accessible information, simplified procedures, timely application processing, support centres, and clear explanations of eligibility requirements. Such measures could help reduce avoidable barriers between policy provisions and the households they are intended to support.

Table 9. Association between Policy Awareness and Receipt of Welfare Benefits

Awareness level	**Received a benefit**	**Did not receive a benefit**	**Total**
High or moderate awareness	16	6	22
Low or very low awareness	15	23	38
Total	**31**	**29**	**60**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that 16 out of 22 respondents with high or moderate awareness received a welfare benefit, representing 72.7%. In comparison, 15 out of 38 respondents

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with low or very low awareness received a benefit, representing 39.5%. Conversely, 60.5% of respondents in the low-awareness group did not receive a benefit, compared with 27.3% in the higher-awareness group. The difference in benefit receipt between the two groups is approximately 33.2 percentage points, indicating a notable association between awareness and welfare benefit receipt.

Table 10. Measures Suggested for Improving Policy Implementation

Suggested measure	Frequency	Percentage
Village-level awareness programmes	14	23.3
Assistance with applications and documentation	12	20.0
Timely processing and transparent tracking	10	16.7
Improved access to educational assistance	8	13.3
Livelihood and skill-development support	7	11.7
Accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms	9	15.0
Total	**60**	**100.0**

Source: Field data.

From the above table, it can be noted that village-level awareness programmes received the highest support, accounting for 23.3% of respondents. Assistance with applications and documentation was suggested by 20.0%, while 16.7% recommended timely processing and transparent tracking of applications. Accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms accounted for 15.0%, improved access to educational assistance for 13.3%, and livelihood and skill-development support for 11.7%. Together, awareness programmes and application assistance account for 43.3% of the suggestions, highlighting the importance respondents place on receiving information and practical help. The findings indicate that improving policy effectiveness requires more than announcing welfare schemes; households must also be able to understand, apply for, track, and access the benefits for which they are eligible. Strengthening local outreach, providing application support, improving administrative transparency, and establishing accessible grievance mechanisms may help make welfare delivery more inclusive and responsive to Dalit households in Hanumakonda district.

Findings and Discussion

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1. Socio-demographic Characteristics: The study findings indicate that 30.0% of respondents belong to the 31–40 years age group, while 56.7% are between 31 and 50 years. Regarding education, 30.0% have secondary education, and 16.7% have no formal education. Occupationally, 30.0% are engaged in daily wage labour, followed by agriculture at 20.0%. These findings highlight the diverse educational and occupational backgrounds of the surveyed Dalit households, which may influence their awareness of welfare schemes and ability to access government assistance.

2. Awareness of Public Policies: The findings reveal that 63.4% of respondents have low or very low awareness of public policies and welfare schemes. Only 13.3% report high awareness. This indicates a substantial gap in the dissemination of information about government welfare programmes among the surveyed households. Clear communication about eligibility, application procedures, documentation, and available benefits is essential to improve awareness and accessibility.

3. Access to Welfare Schemes: The findings show that 33.3% of respondents reported receiving social protection and other eligible welfare benefits, while 30.0% reported receiving educational assistance. Housing assistance accounted for 23.3%, whereas employment-related assistance and skill development accounted for 16.7%. These differences highlight the need to examine access to different welfare programmes and identify the factors affecting benefit receipt. Greater attention should be given to improving awareness and access to employment and livelihood support.

4. Perceived Socio-economic Impact: The findings indicate that 53.3% of respondents reported improvements in social protection, followed by 50.0% reporting improvements in educational opportunities. However, 50.0% reported no major change in employment opportunities, while 45.0% observed no major change in household income. This suggests that the perceived benefits of public policies vary across different dimensions of household well-being. Strengthening employment opportunities, income-generating activities, and skill development may help complement existing welfare measures.

5. Perceived Effectiveness of Programmes: The findings reveal that 43.3% of respondents consider government welfare programmes effective or very effective, while 33.3% consider them moderately effective. Another 23.4% rate them as less effective or ineffective. These findings indicate that although respondents recognise certain benefits, their experiences are not uniformly positive. Improving timely delivery, transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness may strengthen the perceived effectiveness of welfare programmes.

6. Administrative Barriers: The findings identify lack of information as the leading barrier, reported by 23.3% of respondents, followed by delays in application processing at 20.0%. Documentation difficulties account for 16.7%, while inadequate assistance from implementing agencies accounts for 15.0%. These findings demonstrate the importance of addressing both informational and administrative obstacles. Simplified procedures, local application assistance,

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transparent tracking, and accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms may improve the delivery of welfare benefits.

7. Association between Awareness and Benefit Receipt: The findings reveal that 72.7% of respondents with high or moderate awareness received welfare benefits, compared with 39.5% of respondents with low or very low awareness.

8. Beneficiary-oriented Reforms: The findings show that 23.3% of respondents recommend village-level awareness programmes, while 20.0% favour assistance with applications and documentation. Timely processing and transparent tracking are suggested by 16.7%, and 15.0% recommend accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms. These responses highlight the need for practical, beneficiary-centred reforms. Strengthening community awareness, simplifying administrative procedures, improving institutional accountability, and expanding livelihood support could help make public policies more accessible and responsive to the needs of Dalit households in Hanumakonda district.

Suggestions

1. **Strengthen village-level awareness:** Conduct periodic information programmes through Gram Panchayats, educational institutions, community organisations, and relevant welfare offices. Provide clear explanations of scheme eligibility, required documents, application procedures, and grievance mechanisms.
2. **Improve application assistance:** Establish accessible help desks or designated support personnel to assist eligible households with applications, documentation, corrections, and application tracking. Particular attention should be given to older people and those with limited digital literacy.
3. **Strengthen educational support:** Improve awareness of scholarships, residential educational facilities, fee assistance, and other applicable student-support programmes. Monitor application completion, approval, disbursement, and continuation in education.
4. **Promote sustainable economic empowerment:** Link eligible beneficiaries with skill development, livelihood training, financial literacy, market access, and follow-up support. Economic assistance should be assessed in terms of sustainability rather than initial disbursement alone.
5. **Improve administrative transparency:** Make eligibility rules, application requirements, processing stages, and grievance procedures accessible in simple language. Provide status updates and explain reasons for rejected or pending applications.
6. **Strengthen grievance redressal:** Ensure that beneficiaries can raise complaints about delays, incorrect decisions, and difficulties accessing services without unnecessary procedural burdens. Establish clear timelines for responding to complaints.

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7. **Evaluate outcomes systematically:** Assess changes in education, employment, household income, housing, and social protection using appropriate indicators. Distinguish programme outputs, such as funds disbursed, from outcomes, such as improved livelihood security.
8. **Improve district-level coordination:** Encourage coordination among the Scheduled Castes Development Department, educational institutions, local government bodies, and other relevant agencies to reduce duplication and improve referral of eligible beneficiaries.
9. **Promote social inclusion and legal awareness:** Improve awareness of constitutional safeguards and applicable legal protections against caste-based discrimination. Ensure that affected individuals can access appropriate institutional assistance and complaint mechanisms.
10. **Institutionalise beneficiary participation:** Conduct periodic consultations with Dalit households and community organisations. Use feedback to identify implementation gaps and inform district-level planning, monitoring, and policy review.

Conclusion

Public policies play an important role in promoting social justice, educational advancement, economic empowerment, and social inclusion among Dalit communities in Telangana. The present study of Dalit households in Hanumakonda district highlights the importance of examining awareness, access to welfare schemes, benefit utilisation, and perceived socio-economic changes. The findings from the 60 respondents indicate that limited awareness and administrative barriers remain important concerns. Although respondents reported improvements in social protection and educational opportunities, perceived improvements in employment and household income were comparatively limited. The study also identifies an association between policy awareness and welfare benefit receipt, highlighting the importance of accessible information and effective communication. Therefore, village-level awareness programmes, assistance with documentation, timely processing of applications, transparent implementation, and accessible grievance-redressal mechanisms should receive greater attention. Government agencies should also strengthen educational assistance, sustainable livelihood opportunities, housing support, and social protection measures. Ultimately, the effectiveness of public policies should be assessed through reliable field data and measurable outcomes. Such an approach can help identify implementation gaps and improve the accessibility, accountability, and inclusiveness of welfare programmes for Dalit households in Hanumakonda district.

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