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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT WELFARE SCHEMES ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELL- BEING OF BELOW POVERTY LINE FAMILIES: A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE IN JALGAON DISTRICT

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Social Justice Department, Welfare Schemes, Below Poverty Line (BPL) Families, Socio-economic Well-being, Social Work, Inclusive Development, Jalgaon District.</i>	Social welfare programmes implemented by the Social Justice Department play a significant role in promoting inclusive development and improving the quality of life of socio-economically disadvantaged populations in India. Below Poverty Line (BPL) families constitute one of the primary target groups of these welfare initiatives, which aim to reduce poverty, enhance access to education, healthcare, housing, financial assistance, and social security, and foster socio-economic empowerment. Despite the availability of numerous welfare schemes, disparities in awareness, accessibility, utilization, and effective implementation continue to affect the intended outcomes. Against this backdrop, the present study assesses the impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of BPL families from a social work perspective in Jalgaon District, Maharashtra. The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design. Primary data



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	were collected from 300 beneficiaries selected through a multistage random sampling technique using a structured interview schedule, while secondary data were obtained from government reports, policy documents, books, journals, and published research studies. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage, along with inferential statistical techniques, were employed to analyse the data. The findings indicate that the welfare schemes have contributed positively to improving beneficiaries' socio-economic conditions by enhancing access to educational opportunities, financial assistance, social security benefits, livelihood support, and social inclusion. However, the study also identifies several implementation challenges, including limited awareness, procedural complexities, documentation issues, delays in benefit disbursement, and digital barriers that restrict equitable access to welfare programmes. The findings further highlight the crucial role of professional social workers in facilitating awareness, counselling beneficiaries, strengthening community participation, advocating for rights, and improving service delivery mechanisms. The study concludes that while Social Justice Department welfare schemes have made a meaningful contribution to the socio-economic well-being of BPL families, their effectiveness can be further enhanced through simplified administrative procedures, improved outreach strategies, digital inclusion, regular monitoring, and stronger social work interventions. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, administrators, and social work professionals in designing more inclusive, accessible, and beneficiary-oriented welfare programmes that promote sustainable socio-economic development and social justice.
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Introduction

Social justice is one of the fundamental principles of a democratic and welfare state, aiming to ensure equality, dignity, and equitable access to opportunities and resources for all sections of society. In India, the Constitution enshrines the ideals of social, economic, and political justice through its Preamble and various Directive Principles of State Policy. To translate these constitutional ideals into practice, the Government of India and State Governments have introduced numerous welfare programmes targeted at socially and economically disadvantaged groups. These initiatives seek to reduce poverty, eliminate social inequalities, promote inclusive development, and improve the overall quality of life of vulnerable populations.

The Social Justice Department plays a pivotal role in implementing welfare schemes designed for marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, economically weaker sections, and Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. These schemes encompass a wide range of interventions, such as educational



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scholarships, financial assistance, livelihood promotion, social security pensions, skill development programmes, housing support, rehabilitation services, and self-employment initiatives. By addressing the multidimensional nature of poverty and social exclusion, these programmes contribute to the broader objectives of social equity, empowerment, and sustainable development.

Despite the expansion of welfare programmes over the past decades, the socio-economic conditions of many BPL families continue to remain challenging. Limited awareness of available schemes, inadequate dissemination of information, procedural complexities, bureaucratic delays, digital exclusion, documentation requirements, and geographical barriers often prevent eligible beneficiaries from accessing government services effectively. Consequently, the gap between policy formulation and its implementation continues to hinder the realization of intended development outcomes. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of welfare schemes from the perspective of beneficiaries is essential for identifying implementation gaps and improving service delivery.

Socio-economic well-being extends beyond income and employment to include education, healthcare, housing, social security, financial stability, social inclusion, dignity, and opportunities for human development. Welfare interventions are expected not only to provide immediate financial support but also to enhance beneficiaries' capabilities, strengthen resilience against poverty, and promote long-term social and economic empowerment. Measuring these outcomes provides valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of public welfare policies and their contribution to inclusive growth.

From a social work perspective, welfare programmes represent important instruments for promoting social justice, human rights, community development, and social inclusion. Professional social workers facilitate access to welfare services through awareness generation, counselling, advocacy, community mobilisation, capacity building, and coordination with government agencies. They act as catalysts in bridging the gap between beneficiaries and service providers while empowering marginalized communities to claim their rights and actively participate in development processes. Consequently, evaluating welfare schemes through a social work lens offers deeper insights into both programme outcomes and the effectiveness of intervention strategies.

Jalgaon District of Maharashtra presents an appropriate setting for this study due to its socio-economic diversity and the presence of a considerable population belonging to economically weaker sections. Although several welfare schemes are being implemented through the Social Justice Department, empirical evidence regarding their actual impact on the socio-economic well-being of BPL families remains limited. Existing studies have primarily focused on scheme implementation, administrative challenges, or specific beneficiary groups, while comprehensive assessments integrating socio-economic outcomes with social work perspectives are relatively scarce.



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Against this background, the present study seeks to assess the impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Jalgaon District. The study examines beneficiaries' awareness, accessibility, utilization, and satisfaction with welfare schemes, evaluates their contribution to improving socio-economic conditions, identifies challenges faced during implementation, and explores the role of professional social work in strengthening programme effectiveness. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social welfare administration, provide evidence for policy improvement, and support the development of more inclusive, transparent, and beneficiary-centred welfare programmes.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of integrating effective public welfare policies with professional social work practices to achieve sustainable socio-economic development and ensure that the benefits of social justice reach the most vulnerable sections of society.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the socio-economic profile of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Jalgaon District.

To assess the impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.



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To identify the challenges faced by beneficiaries in accessing welfare schemes and suggest appropriate social work interventions for improving their effectiveness.

Research Hypotheses

The study is based on the following hypotheses:

H₀₁ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Jalgaon District.

H₁₁ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Jalgaon District.

H₀₂ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant association between beneficiaries' awareness of Social Justice Department welfare schemes and their utilization of these schemes.

H₁₂ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant association between beneficiaries' awareness of Social Justice Department welfare schemes and their utilization of these schemes.

H₀₃ (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant relationship between access to Social Justice Department welfare schemes and the socio-economic status of BPL families.

H₁₃ (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant relationship between access to Social Justice Department welfare schemes and the socio-economic status of BPL families.

4. Review of Literature

The review of literature provides the theoretical and empirical foundation for the study by examining previous research on social welfare programmes, poverty alleviation, and socio-economic development. It helps identify the existing knowledge, research gaps, and the relevance of the present study.

4.1 Concept of Social Justice

Social justice refers to the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within society. It emphasizes equality, human dignity, social inclusion, and the protection of vulnerable groups. In India, the constitutional vision of social justice is reflected through various welfare policies and programmes designed to uplift marginalized communities.

4.2 Social Justice Department and Welfare Schemes

The Social Justice Department implements various welfare schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of disadvantaged sections of society. These include educational scholarships, financial assistance, social security pensions, skill development programmes, rehabilitation services,



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self-employment assistance, housing support, and empowerment initiatives. These programmes seek to reduce poverty, promote equality, and enhance social inclusion.

4.3 Socio-Economic Well-Being of BPL Families

Socio-economic well-being encompasses multiple dimensions, including income, employment, education, healthcare, housing, social security, financial stability, and quality of life. Government welfare schemes are expected to improve these dimensions by providing financial support, educational opportunities, livelihood assistance, and access to essential public services.

4.4 Previous Empirical Studies

Previous studies have reported that welfare programmes contribute positively to poverty reduction, educational attainment, livelihood enhancement, and social inclusion. However, several researchers have also identified challenges such as inadequate awareness, bureaucratic procedures, delays in implementation, digital exclusion, and insufficient monitoring, which reduce programme effectiveness. These findings indicate the need for continuous evaluation of welfare schemes from the beneficiaries' perspective.

4.5 Research Gap

Although several studies have examined the implementation and effectiveness of welfare programmes in India, limited research has specifically assessed the impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families from a social work perspective in Jalgaon District. The present study seeks to bridge this gap by providing empirical evidence on programme outcomes, beneficiaries' experiences, and the role of professional social work in enhancing welfare service delivery.

5. Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research approach using a descriptive and analytical research design to assess the impact of Social Justice Department welfare schemes on the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Jalgaon District, Maharashtra. The descriptive design was employed to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries, their level of awareness, and the utilization of various welfare schemes, whereas the analytical design was used to evaluate the effectiveness of these schemes in improving their socio-economic conditions. The universe of the study comprised all Below Poverty Line (BPL) families residing in Jalgaon District who had benefited from one or more welfare schemes implemented by the Social Justice Department. A sample of 300 beneficiaries was selected through a multistage random sampling technique. In the first stage, selected talukas of Jalgaon District were identified, followed by the random selection of villages and urban wards. Finally, eligible beneficiaries were selected through simple random sampling.



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Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for the study. Primary data were collected directly from the respondents using a structured interview schedule, supplemented by observation and informal discussions wherever necessary. Secondary data were obtained from books, peer-reviewed journals, government publications, annual reports of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Government of Maharashtra, Census of India reports, NITI Aayog publications, policy documents, and other relevant literature. The independent variable of the study was the Social Justice Department welfare schemes, while the dependent variable was the socio-economic well-being of BPL families, measured through indicators such as income, education, employment, housing, health, social security, and overall quality of life.

The collected data were systematically edited, coded, classified, tabulated, and analysed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistical methods such as the Chi-square test and correlation analysis were applied to examine the relationship between welfare scheme utilization and the socio-economic well-being of beneficiaries. The findings were presented through tables, graphs, and charts to facilitate interpretation and discussion. Ethical standards were maintained throughout the research process by obtaining informed consent from all respondents, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and using the collected information exclusively for academic and research purposes. The findings of the study are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on social welfare administration and provide useful recommendations for policymakers, social work professionals, and government agencies to enhance the effectiveness, accessibility, and outreach of Social Justice Department welfare schemes for Below Poverty Line families.

6. Results and Discussion

The analysis revealed that Social Justice Department welfare schemes have made a positive contribution to improving the socio-economic conditions of BPL families in Jalgaon District.

Most respondents reported increased awareness of government welfare programmes and had benefited from schemes related to education, social security, financial assistance, and livelihood support. Beneficiaries experienced improvements in household income, educational opportunities for children, access to healthcare services, housing conditions, and social security benefits.

Despite these positive outcomes, respondents identified several barriers affecting effective utilization of welfare schemes. These included inadequate awareness, procedural complexities, documentation requirements, delays in sanctioning benefits, digital illiteracy, and limited access to government offices. Such challenges reduced the overall effectiveness of programme implementation.



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The study also highlighted the significant role of professional social workers in creating awareness, assisting beneficiaries during the application process, providing counselling, facilitating access to government services, and strengthening community participation. These interventions contributed to improved accessibility and better utilization of welfare schemes.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the welfare schemes have positively influenced the socio-economic well-being of BPL families, further improvements in implementation, monitoring, and beneficiary support mechanisms are required to maximize programme effectiveness.

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–30 years	48	16.0
31–45 years	102	34.0
46–60 years	110	36.7
Above 60 years	40	13.3
Total	300	100.0

Awareness of Social Justice Department Welfare Schemes

Illustrative distribution of awareness levels among 300 BPL beneficiaries.

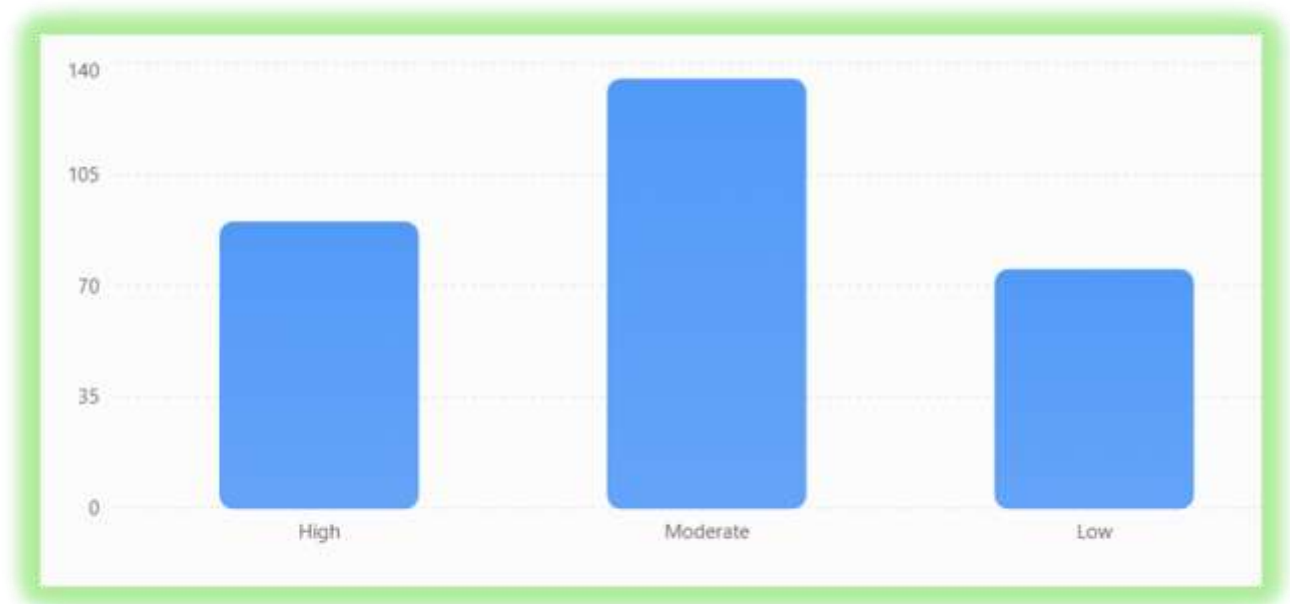


Figure 1. Awareness of Social Justice Department Welfare Schemes



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Interpretation:

The illustrative chart indicates that the majority of respondents (135) had a moderate level of awareness regarding Social Justice Department welfare schemes. A smaller proportion (90) reported a high level of awareness, while 75 respondents had low awareness. This suggests that although many beneficiaries are familiar with available welfare programmes, there remains a need for enhanced awareness campaigns, information dissemination, and community outreach to improve programme utilization.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that Social Justice Department welfare schemes have significantly contributed to improving the socio-economic well-being of Below Poverty Line families in Jalgaon District. The schemes have enhanced beneficiaries' access to education, financial assistance, social security, livelihood opportunities, and other essential services, thereby supporting poverty reduction and social inclusion.

However, the effectiveness of these programmes is constrained by issues such as lack of awareness, administrative delays, procedural complexities, documentation challenges, and digital barriers. These limitations prevent many eligible beneficiaries from receiving the full benefits of welfare programmes.

From a social work perspective, the study emphasizes that professional social workers play a vital role in bridging the gap between welfare policies and beneficiaries through awareness generation, advocacy, counselling, community mobilisation, and facilitation of service delivery. Strengthening these interventions can significantly improve programme outreach and effectiveness.

8. Recommendations

- ❖ Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:
- ❖ Strengthen awareness campaigns regarding Social Justice Department welfare schemes at the village level.
- ❖ Simplify application procedures and reduce unnecessary documentation requirements.
- ❖ Improve digital literacy and establish beneficiary assistance centres to facilitate online applications.
- ❖ Ensure timely approval and transparent distribution of welfare benefits.
- ❖ Strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to improve programme accountability.
- ❖ Increase the involvement of trained social workers in awareness generation, counselling, community mobilisation, and beneficiary support.
- ❖ Enhance coordination among government departments, local self-government institutions, and civil society organisations for effective implementation of welfare programmes.



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9. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

10. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

11. PLAGIARISM POLICY

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

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