

Review of: "Aligning Government Initiatives with Sustainable Development Goals: A Village-Level Mapping in India"

Dharmendra Kumawat¹

¹ Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra

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The authors must be appreciated for this very much needed academic critique of various Social Protection Schemes in rural India. This evidence-based paper on the simultaneous impact assessment of welfare schemes through matrix mapping of a population is a good effort, especially culminating and depicting in Fig.2. The authors have developed linkages with SDGs and have interestingly concluded in terms of depicting Fig.4 as the proportionate beneficiaries of the welfare schemes. However, the following points need attention to improve further:

1. The specificity and crisp documentation of research questions and their responses made by the study are lacking.
2. The points mentioned in the literature review were not addressed adequately in the study.
3. The collection and analysis of data are so broad that the role of FGD may affect the interpretation, so FGD may be left off from the methodology.
4. T-test has been mentioned in the methodology, but the analysis and results did not place anywhere in the paper.
5. The discussion part is incorporated while interpreting the data, and very general comments have been made without any scientific basis on the following issues:
 - a. Point 4.1: Authors' bias is reflected in the interpretation of economic differences; the data must show Forward Caste and other Castes' populations belonging to Above Poverty Line.
 - b. Reiteration of poverty as a social phenomenon is not the outcome of the study, nor any such correlation was found in the study, but it has been unnecessarily mentioned at multiple places in the paper. At point No. 4.3, a comparison was drawn by volume of financial benefits to different sections. This may include a comparison based on the benefit as a percentage of annual income of various sections. This would allow a better comparison.
 - c. The data and its interpretation are incorrect at some places. For example, Poorest of the Poor and Agri-labour are better receivers as compared to their respective income and occupation groups (Fig.2), which means the benefits are approaching the target groups, but the authors have documented it conversely. Also, at point No. 4.3.2, authors have not taken into account the maintenance cost of landholdings and just interpreted the higher benefit accrued by the Landholder class.
 - d. Wrong comparison between housing subsidies to homeless and Direct Cash Transfer (DCT) to farm owners. It is not clear as to why the issue of loan waivers was mentioned.
1. In section 4.4, an entirely unscientific depiction has been made. While the entire study is based on micro-analysis of cross-sectional data, the macro-outcome should not be drawn. The subsidies, their objectives, and impacts are

different and cannot be summed up as Total Subsidy. So the curve showing Total Subsidy vs. Annual Income can be entirely misleading.

2. The discussion unnecessarily mentions the “exclusionary nature of some schemes,” taken from some news article, which spoils the very purpose of the study. As the paper examines various schemes by taking into consideration specific target groups, which means all the schemes are not for all.
3. The recommendation part is quite theoretical and has not taken into account the analysis made in the study.

Finally, the authors have made arduous efforts and should integrate them with a better interpretation of data (and avoid general comments), which may improve the article further.