International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 15s,2025
https://theaspd.com/index.php

Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA): A Comparative Analysis Of Adopted And Non-Adopted Rural Villages

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Abstract
Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) is one of the most ambitious programs India has launched to bridge the developmental gap between academic institutions and rural communities. This study attempts to analyze the rural developmental impact of the UBA through the analysis of socioeconomic conditions prevailing across UBA and non-UBA villages to register the actual effectiveness of the UBA in terms of rural development. The study encompassed sixteen villages across four administrative blocks through extensive surveys and statistical analysis of 400 households comprising a total of 1,759 individuals. Multitudinous positive results emerged for caste inclusiveness and occupational diversification in UBA villages. O.B.C. formed 50.0% of the population in UBA villages, compared with only 26.5% in non-UBA villages ($p = 0.0019$), indicating greater inclusiveness and participation across social strata in UBA villages. Further, changes in livelihood were substantial between UBA and non-UBA villages, with engagement in farming rising from 14.23% to 35.11% and private employment from 1.10% to 11.67% ($p < 0.0001$), indicating better employment opportunities and away from traditional dependence on agriculture only. However, the results indicate the absence of any statistically significant differences in terms of gender composition, Aadhaar enrolment, poverty incidence, level of education, and age structure, highlighting that while UBA is seen to be doing well in certain highly targeted areas such as economic empowerment and social representation, rural transformation-that is, at least in foundational indicators-needs further deep, long-term, and multi-pronged interventions to yield sustainable results into the rural landscape.

Keywords: *Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Rural development, Socio-economic impact, Livelihood diversification, Comparative analysis*

INTRODUCTION

The persistent developmental divide between urban and rural India continues to remain one of the biggest impediments to the road to inclusive development. To mitigate this developmental divide, the Government of India started the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA). The most recent initiative aims to link higher education institutions with rural communities to promote sustainable development via academic collaboration and participatory planning [1]. UBA seeks to address not just the basic needs of rural India but also to create a collaborative ecosystem where knowledge and innovation foster grassroots transformation. With a multidisciplinary approach and a holistic outlook, UBA attempts to empower villages through technology transfer, local entrepreneurship, and capacity building in accordance with actual community needs [2].Assessing socio-economic changes in rural development is vital in knowing whether such policies bring about the desired results. A comparative analysis between UBA-adopted and non-adopted villages will show the practicality of the program. While government reports showcase infrastructure and participatory developments due to UBA, the dimension of livelihood, caste change, employment opportunity, and service access need to be independently evaluated to understand which done their socio-economic footprint has gone [3]. The study highlights the absence of empirical, village-level data-driven assessments to evaluate the actual impact of UBA upon structural transformations in rural livelihoods. While a multitude of initiatives have been launched, and continue to be so, aimed at rural development, only very few have engaged academe in as deep a way in the policy implementation

process as UBA. A strong case is thus made for a more comprehensive ground-level evaluation of the UBA model. This emphasizes the need for a comprehensive ground-level evaluation of the UBA model. However, the issue with well-intentioned programs is that good intentions do not always result in tangible change. Notwithstanding UBA's extensive deployment throughout India, the study revealed a surprising paucity of tangible evidence regarding its impact on individuals' lives. Are villages really better off after being adopted by academic institutions? Are families finding new opportunities? Is the program creating the transformation it promised?This study was born from the need to answer these crucial questions. The study set out to conduct a thorough, evidence-based comparison of socio-economic conditions between villages that have been part of UBA and those that haven't, seeking to understand not just whether the program is working, but how and where it's making the biggest impact.The study contributes to the rural development literature with a critical socio-economic impact assessment based on comparative data from 16 villages, assessing how UBA affects various indicators like occupational structures, caste inclusivity, access to services, and social mobility. It attempts to connect theory with practice by adopting the perspective of participatory development and comparative rural analytics, thus contributing to the discourse on how higher education institutions can be active agents of rural transformation. There are also practical applications here since it gives some cues to policymakers, educational institutions, and rural planners for rethinking development strategies that are based on data, inclusive, and community centered.The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the literature with theories and issues on rural development and institutional involvement; The research design, sampling techniques, and analytical methods are explained in Section 3; major results and findings are presented in Section 4; Section 5 provides discussion and interpretation of contextual settings; and finally, Section 6 presents conclusions with implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research. References are included at the end.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Rural Development Theories

- **Participatory Development Theory:** Participatory Development Theory, with Robert Chambers as the main theorist, encourages the local communities to play an active role in the planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of development projects [4]. Through the application of participatory principles in community-driven needs assessment and planning by academic institutions, thereby enhancing local empowerment, social cohesion, and capacity-building at the rural level [5]. UBA's framework adopts these concepts through participatory rural appraisal and institutional collaboration, giving the villagers a large say in problem-solving and project prioritization. This democratizes project intervention and ensures the implementation of development activities responds more to local needs [6].
- **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF):** The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, developed by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the UK, concentrates on how people access assets- here: human, social, physical, financial, and natural capital-to sustain and improve their livelihoods' [7]. UBA, through skills development, entrepreneurship, and infrastructure support, aims to foster resilient livelihoods in rural households. The UBA encourages diversification and focuses on skill-building, mainly in agriculture and private employment sectors, which broadly conforms to the SLF's multidimensional approach towards rural resilience and poverty alleviation [8].
- **Human Capital Theory:** Human Capital Theory, put forth by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, states that investment in education, skills, and health leads to an improvement in the productivity of the individual and other economic returns [9]. Although more and more applied to rural education and development studies, the Human Capital Theory states that investment in education and skill development brings about higher productivity and economic growth [10]. The UBA programs thus create rural human capital by means of the transfer of knowledge, skill development, and institutional linkages, thereby increasing employability and economic participation in adopting villages [11].

2.1.2 Socio-Economic Transformation Theories

- **Social Capital Theory:** According to Social Capital Theory, introduced by Pierre Bourdieu in the year of 1986 [12] and elaborated upon by Robert Putnam, trust, norms, and relationship networks within a community form the basis for cooperative actions undertaken for the greater good [13]. Furthermore,

UBA fosters the development of both bridging and bonding social capital by way of partnership between academia and the local community, facilitates a two-way exchange of knowledge, and develops community trust and collaboration toward rural planning [14].

- **Modernization Theory:** Modernization Theory, notably developed by Walt W. Rostow, suggests that traditional societies pass through linear stages in their development toward industrialization and modernity, through the adoption of science and technology and institutional reforms [15]. UBA may be seen as a tool of modernization, imparting contemporary know-how, digital tools, and governance practices to the countryside. In distinguished harmony with institutional expertise brought onto village development, this initiative leads to economic transition and modernization of rural socio-economic structures [16].
- **Theory of Change (ToC):** According to Weiss (1995) [17], the Theory of Change provides a systematic way of mapping how interventions lead to desired outputs, identifying assumptions, and developing pathways of change. The UBA follows a ToC model where institutions of higher learning put into operative context-specific interventions that should spur improved rural livelihoods, community participation, and socio-economic empowerment. UBA impact assessment on ToC will help trace those outcomes of caste inclusion, job diversification, and social upliftment into specific programmatic actions and strategies [18].

2.2 Review of literature

2.2.1 Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Implementation and Household Opportunity Creation

The role of developmental works in bringing socioeconomic changes at the grassroots level has been very well studied by scholars. In this backdrop, several studies have been conducted on the ability of UBA in enhancing household opportunity creation through interventions at the village level. Kumar et al. (2021) [19] indicated that the UBA interventions, particularly those related to technology transfer, training in sustainable agriculture practices, and rural entrepreneurship, contributed a lot toward increasing household income diversification and skill acquisition of marginalized communities. Similarly, Mishra and Tiwari (2022) [20] stated that the educational and infrastructural inputs under the UBA led rural households to better access resources for livelihood, along with digital literacy and health awareness. Patil et al. (2023) [21] explicated that the strong participative approach of UBA ensured that solutions were tailor-made to the realities of the rural areas, focusing primarily on employment generation, women's empowerment, and clear energy issues. Moreover, Narayanan and Dey (2023) [22] pointed out that capacity-building efforts under UBA intervention, which included vocational training and SHG (Self-Help Group) facilitation, gave rise to micro-enterprises and thus strengthened rural households' ability to decide for themselves.However, despite these positive outcomes, scholarly investigation remains limited in fully capturing the long-term transformation brought about by UBA at the household level. There is a scarcity of longitudinal assessments that measure how recurring UBA interventions translate into intergenerational improvements in economic security and educational attainment [23]. Additionally, much of the current literature emphasizes outputs (e.g., number of workshops conducted, toilets built) rather than outcomes such as shifts in consumption patterns, social mobility, or rural migration trends. The observed gap in the literature suggests a need for comprehensive, mixed-method studies that evaluate how UBA-driven interventions systematically affect household-level capabilities.

2.2.2 Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Adoption and Socio-Economic Development

The literature under review consistently emphasized the importance of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) in accelerating socio-economic development in rural India. Rao et al. (2021) [24] asserted that UBA adoption, through academic institution-led interventions, resulted in measurable improvements in areas such as education, health, and livelihood creation. Deshmukh and Rani (2022) [25] highlighted that community-based approaches under UBA—such as water conservation, renewable energy use, and skill development—directly impacted income levels, sanitation standards, and women's participation in local governance. Studies also affirmed that the institutional involvement ensured structured planning and participatory development, facilitating better resource utilization and enhanced rural capabilities [26]. Past research has scarcely dealt with the region-specific challenges and institutional disparities influencing UBA Program success [27]. Most studies focus on isolated one-of-a-kind instances without a comparative evaluation across varied socio-cultural and geographic landscapes. Further, little attention is given to how

the institutional readiness, community trust, and infrastructural support mediate UBA outcomes [28]. This gap calls for intense empirical investigations exploring the region-specific nature of UBA to inform its scalability and sustainability. The review lends support to limited investigations about how UBA, which has been said to have positive effects on rural socio-economic development, can be more optimally leveraged across the diverse rural terrains of India.

2.2.3 Relationship between Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) and Community Inclusion & Participation

Raghavan et al. (2020) [29] regarded community participation as a very pivotal intermediate between institutional outreach initiatives and sustainable rural development. Scholars have found that educational institutions participating in UBA actually fostered higher levels of local participation in developmental planning and implementation. This participation occurred with the locals assuming greater ownership of projects, responsiveness to local needs, and socio-technical collaboration of villagers [30]. Existing research, hence, pointed out that such features of community participation might constitute the vehicle through which academic knowledge was converted into locally relevant, and hence sustainable, outcomes [14].As Banerjee et al. (2023) [31] point out, the mediation effects of community participation have not yet been sufficiently researched, especially in the context of rural development. While some research has focused on the systematic establishment of institutional intervention yielding better village-level outcomes, very few studies investigate if community inclusion mediates that relationship [32]. Excluded are questions examining contextual variation across regions as well as traditional governance practices that could influence the mediation role of participation on institutional engagement outcomes; the authors established this gap and called for a further study on whether community inclusion mediated the beneficial impact of UBA initiatives on rural transformation. This finding then gave rise to the hypothesis that community participation mediates the impact of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan interventions on sustainable rural development in India.

2.2.4 Relationship between UBA and Structural Transformation in Rural Areas

Okonjo, et al., (2023) [33] considered financial inclusion as an important intermediary linking institutional banking activities and economic transformation in disempowered communities. The researchers identified another rural banking initiative of UBA, including agency banking and mobile financial services, to increase household savings, microcredit, and community investments. This intervention stimulated wider economic engagement, having an impact on women and youth in particular, and a rise in entrepreneurial activities within agriculture as well as in informal markets [34]. From various case studies, a strong case has been fabricated to suggest that these financial channeling devices' access mechanism acts as the transmission channel whereby commercial banking works in contributing to rural economic restructuring and economic development [35].

According to Nwani, et al. (2023) [21], there remains little research into the role financial services play as an intervening factor in structural transformation, especially in the sub-Saharan African context. While previous studies have confirmed the importance of banking presence in local development, little research has been done on how different banking initiatives made possible by banks, such as those by UBA, mediate structural changes in labor patterns and resource allocation [36]. Most of the key questions related to how such interventions vary across different rural economies remain unanswered, especially as regards how policy frameworks and digital infrastructure might influence banking outreach and its ability to serve as a channel of change. The experts pointed out this would-be research gap and suggested further investigation into how banking interventions like UBA’s rural strategy in turn mediate longer-term structural change in West Africa’s agrarian and peripheral regions.

2.3 Research Gap

Though several studies have considered the role of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan in rural development, serious gaps remain in the socio-economic impacts measurable at the household and community level. Much of the literature is descriptive or speculates on isolated success stories; no actual comparative study has been done on villages that have been adopted by UBA and those that have not. Further, there is no common yardstick and empirical data on what changes UBA causes to key socio-economic indices such as income, education, health, and employment. Instead, the study often neglects region-specific challenges and the contextual differences of far-flung rural India, thereby limiting the applicability of the findings. Besides,

the perception of rural beneficiaries on the efficacy of UBA is under-examined. Few longitudinal studies exist that assess sustained impact over time. From overcoming these limitations, a broader view of the real impact of UBA would evolve and serve to shape relevant policies toward more inclusive and scalable rural development. Several studies have considered the role of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan in rural development, but serious gaps remain in the socio-economic impacts measurable at the household and community level. Much of the literature is descriptive or speculates on isolated success stories; no actual comparative study has been done on villages that have been adopted by UBA and those that have not. Further, there is no common yardstick and empirical data on what changes UBA actually causes to key socio-economic indices such as income, education, health, and employment. Instead, the study often neglects region-specific challenges and the contextual differences of far-flung rural India, thereby limiting the applicability of the findings. Besides, the perception of rural beneficiaries on the efficacy of UBA is under-examined. Few longitudinal studies exist that assess sustained impact over time. From overcoming these limitations, a broader view of the real impact of UBA would evolve and serve to shape relevant policies toward more inclusive and scalable rural development.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are incredibly helpful in facilitating the interpretation of complex phenomena and informing the nature of research as well as practice. By definition, the represent networks or interrelated concepts that provide structure and consistency in any field. Figure 1 explores the process of classifying villages by socio-economic features under the UBA scheme. The dependent variable is the village type (adopted UBA or non-adopted), and the independent variables include caste composition, occupational distribution, educational attainment, and economic status. These independent variables reflect structural inequalities that might affect UBA selection. For an unbiased analysis, the model also includes control variables: gender distribution, age structure, and Aadhaar possession. These control variables serve to eliminate bias arising from demographic and institutional forces that might otherwise confound the results.

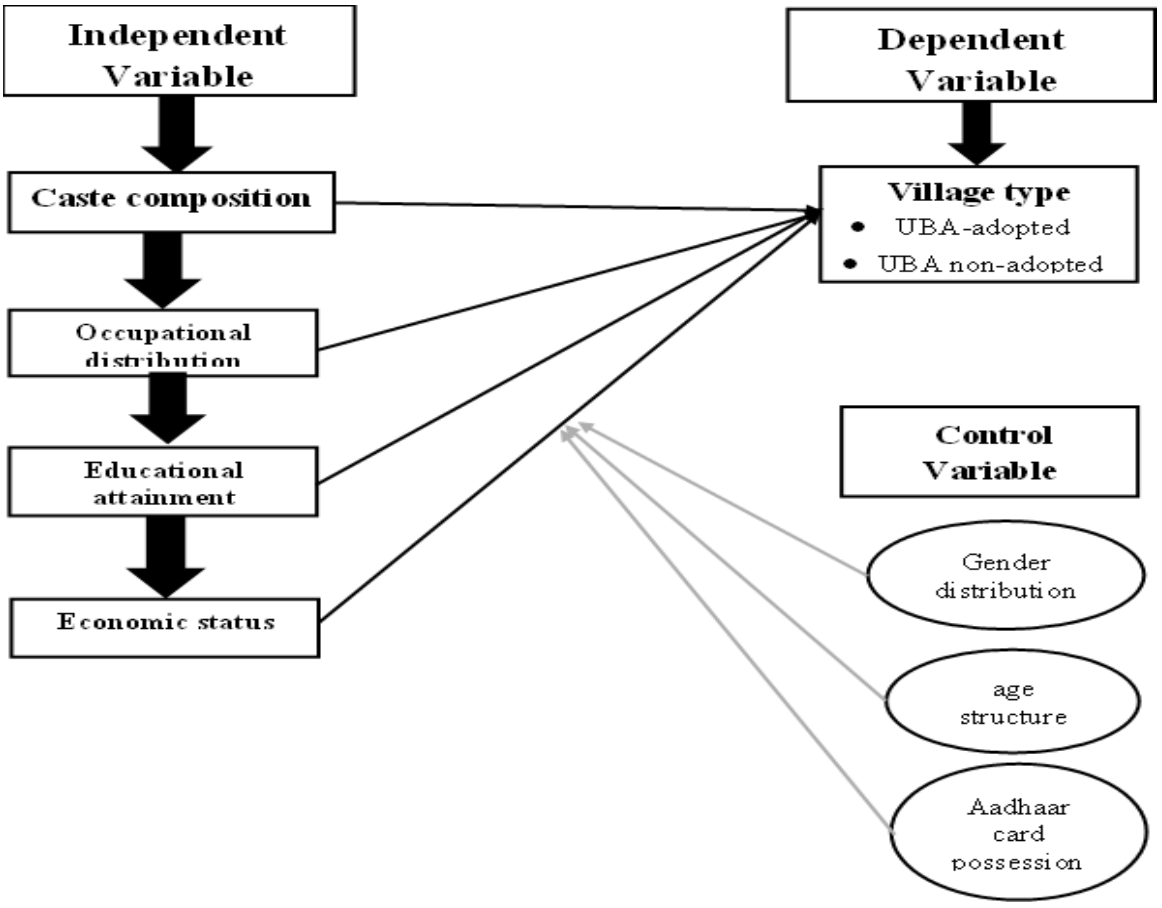

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Self-Prepared by Author)

2. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a cross-sectional comparative research design with a quantitative approach, aimed at evaluating the impact of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) program. Instead of tracking changes over time, this design captured a "snapshot" of both UBA-adopted and non-adopted villages in the Jaipur district of Rajasthan. The intention was to compare outcomes between similar villages of Jaipur (Rajasthan) that had experienced different interventions. This methodology allowed for the collection and analysis of numerical data to ensure objectivity and statistical validity. The approach was specifically chosen to support evidence-based policymaking through robust statistical analysis rather than relying on anecdotal or subjective assessments.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Sample Selection

A multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to select the study sample. The sampling process was executed in three distinct stages:

- **Stage One: Block Selection**

Four administrative blocks were selected based on the criterion that each contained both UBA-adopted and non-adopted villages. This was done to ensure consistency in administrative and environmental conditions across the sampled villages.

- **Stage Two: Village Selection**

Within each block, a simple random sampling method was used to select 8 UBA-adopted and 8 non-adopted villages, totaling 16 villages from Jaipur district.

- **Stage Three: Household Selection**

In each village, 25 households were selected using the random walk method, a technique that ensured households were chosen from different areas of the village to avoid geographical clustering. This yielded a total of 400 households (200 from UBA villages and 200 from non-UBA villages), representing 1,759 individuals (920 from UBA and 839 from non-UBA villages).

3.2.2 Survey Administration

Data was collected over a period of six to eight months through face-to-face interviews with heads of households or senior family members who were best informed about the household's socio-economic profile.

The survey instrument collected comprehensive data across various indicators, including demographic profiles (age, gender, caste), economic factors (income sources, employment), educational attainment, and participation in government schemes.

To ensure high data quality, supervisors performed random checks and validations throughout the data collection period.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

- **Descriptive Analysis**

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations were used to summarize the basic characteristics of the households and identify patterns across UBA and non-UBA villages.

- **Statistical Analysis**

Inferential statistics were employed to test for statistically significant differences between the two groups. Chi-square tests were used to evaluate categorical variables such as caste composition, occupational categories, education levels, and economic classification (BPL/APL). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was set as the threshold to determine if observed differences were unlikely to have occurred by chance.

- **Tools for Analysis**

SPSS version 25.0 was used for data entry, cleaning, and analysis. The software facilitated both descriptive and inferential analysis, ensuring accurate and reliable statistical reporting.

3. Results

4.1. Demographic Profile

The study sample comprised 1,759 individuals across 400 households. Table 1 presents the gender distribution, showing a slight male predominance in both groups (UBA: 56.27%, Non-UBA: 53.74%) with no statistically significant difference ($p=0.585$). This balanced gender representation across both

village types provides a solid foundation for comparative analysis without gender-based sampling bias.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Individuals Across UBA and Non-UBA Villages

Gender	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
Male	56.27	53.74	54.80 (969)
Female	43.72	46.25	44.91 (790)
Total	100.00 (920)	100.00 (839)	100.00 (1759)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.2 Caste Composition

Significant differences emerged in caste composition between village types ($\chi 2=14.85$, $p=0.0019$), as illustrated in **Table 2**. UBA villages showed a notably higher representation of OBC households (50.0% vs 26.5%) and substantially lower representation of the 'Others' category (9.0% vs 27.0%). This pattern suggests differential participation or targeting mechanisms in UBA village selection that may correlate with caste-based social structures.

Table 2: Caste Composition of Households in UBA and Non-UBA Villages

Caste	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
SC	21.00	28.00	24.50 (98)
ST	20.00	18.50	19.25 (77)
OBC	50.00	26.50	38.25 (153)
Others	9.00	27.00	18.00 (72)
Total	100.00 (200)	100.00 (200)	100.00 (400)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.3 Government Scheme Participation

As demonstrated in **Tables 3-4**, Aadhaar card possession was uniformly high across both groups (UBA: 97.39%, Non-UBA: 95.47%) with no significant difference ($p=0.399$), indicating successful universal coverage of this digital identity program regardless of UBA status. Similarly, APL/BPL distribution showed no significant variation ($p=0.676$), with APL households comprising the majority in both village types (UBA: 76.0%, Non-UBA: 72.0%).

Table 3: Aadhaar Card Ownership Among Individuals

Aadhaar Status	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
With the Aadhaar Card	97.39	95.47	96.43 (1697)
Without Aadhaar	2.60	4.52	3.56 (62)
Total	100.00 (920)	100.00 (839)	100.00 (1759)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

Table 4: Household Distribution by Poverty Line Status

Category	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
APL	76.00	72.00	74.00 (296)

BPL	24.00	28.00	26.00 (104)
Total	100.00 (200)	100.00 (200)	100.00 (400)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.4 Age Structure

The age distribution, as presented in **Table 5**, showed no significant differences between village types (p=0.353). Youth (45.13%) constituted the largest demographic segment across both village types, followed by children (21.45%) and adults (21.42%). This age structure reflects the typical demographic profile of rural India, with a predominantly young population, providing substantial human capital for development interventions.

Table 5: Age-wise Distribution of Population

Age Group	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
Infant	4.75	5.58	5.17 (90)
Child	25.53	17.37	21.45 (376)
Youth	45.12	45.13	45.13 (796)
Adult	18.52	24.32	21.42 (375)
Senior Citizen	6.05	7.58	6.82 (122)
Total	100.00 (920)	100.00 (839)	100.00 (1759)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.5 Educational Attainment

Educational levels, as depicted in **Table 6**, showed no significant differences (p=0.420) between UBA and non-UBA villages, with similar proportions of literacy and higher education across both groups. However, some notable patterns emerge in non-UBA villages, showing higher illiteracy rates (40.37% vs 28.60%), while UBA villages demonstrated higher graduation rates (15.92% vs 10.03%), suggesting potential indirect benefits of UBA interventions on educational aspirations or opportunities.

Table 6: Educational Attainment Among Individuals

Education Level	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
Literate	20.40	25.52	22.96 (389)
Not Literate	28.60	40.37	34.49 (597)
Primary	6.63	3.08	4.86 (89)
Upper Primary	8.58	5.64	7.11 (130)
Secondary	10.17	7.87	9.02 (163)
Senior Secondary	8.14	5.07	6.61 (120)
Graduation	15.92	10.03	12.98 (236)
Post Graduation	1.53	2.38	1.96 (35)
Total	100.00 (839)	100.00 (920)	100.00 (1759)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.6 Occupational Distribution

The most significant difference emerged in occupational patterns ($p<0.0001$), as clearly illustrated in **Table 7**. UBA villages demonstrated substantially higher engagement in direct land ownership farming (35.11% vs 14.23%) and private sector employment (11.67% vs 1.10%), while non-UBA villages showed higher proportions in leased land farming (17.01% vs 1.16%) and both skilled (11.12% vs 1.91%) and unskilled wage labour (11.13% vs 0.64%). This pattern suggests that UBA interventions may have facilitated land ownership consolidation, skill development, and entrepreneurship opportunities, leading to reduced dependence on wage labour and tenant farming arrangements.

Table 7: Occupational Distribution of Individuals

Occupation	UBA (%)	Non-UBA (%)	Total (%) (Count)
Farming	35.11	14.23	24.67 (442)
Farming (Leased Land)	1.16	17.01	9.09 (152)
Animal Husbandry	2.02	1.96	1.99 (36)
Poultry	1.93	1.06	1.50 (27)
Skilled Wage Worker	1.91	11.12	6.52 (111)
Unskilled Wage Worker	0.64	11.13	5.89 (100)
Government Employee	1.65	1.37	1.51 (27)
Private Employee	11.67	1.10	6.39 (116)
Artisan	1.41	1.13	1.27 (22)
Business	3.13	0.73	1.93 (35)
Total	60.63 (558)	60.63 (510)	60.63 (1068)

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

4.7 Statistical Significance Testing

Table 8: Summary of Statistical Tests

Variable	Test	p-value	Significance	Interpretation
Caste	Chi-square	0.0019	Significant	Clear caste composition difference between UBA and Non-UBA villages
Occupation	Chi-square	0.0000	Significant	Strong difference in occupation types; UBA villages show more diversified livelihoods
Gender	Chi-square	0.5850	Not Significant	Gender distribution is similar across village types
Aadhaar Possession	Chi-square	0.3986	Not Significant	Aadhaar card ownership is equally prevalent
APL/BPL Status	Chi-square	0.6763	Not Significant	Poverty status does not differ significantly
Education Level	Chi-square	0.4201	Not Significant	Educational attainments are similar across groups
Age Group	Chi-square	0.3526	Not Significant	Age distribution does not vary notably

Source: Author's own calculations, based on primary survey conducted (2023–2024).

As demonstrated in **Table 8**, it summarizes the results of chi-square statistical tests used to compare key

socio-economic and demographic variables between UBA (Unnat Bharat Abhiyan) and non-UBA villages. Significant differences were found in caste composition and occupational distribution. The p-value for caste was 0.0019, indicating a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This suggests that UBA villages have a more diverse caste representation, possibly reflecting greater inclusion of marginalized communities. Similarly, occupational distribution showed a highly significant difference ($p < 0.0001$), with UBA villages displaying more diversified livelihood patterns, particularly in farming and private employment. These findings point to a positive influence of UBA on livelihood opportunities and social inclusion. In contrast, no significant differences were observed in gender distribution ($p = 0.5850$), Aadhaar possession ($p = 0.3986$), poverty status (APL/BPL) ($p = 0.6763$), education level ($p = 0.4201$), and age group distribution ($p = 0.3526$). This indicates that these broader demographic and socio-economic characteristics remain similar across both UBA and non-UBA villages.

4. DISCUSSION

This study establishes that Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) transforms living standards in the rural areas through participatory and need-based development interventions. The findings of the present study align with those of Ghosh et al. (2024) [37] wherein it is found that the UBA villages still suffer from many deficiencies in the areas of health, sanitation, and education, calling for urgent better implementation. It has also been reported by Deore et al. (2022) [38] that UBA could alleviate poverty and unemployment through academic-community partnerships, in turn limiting rural-urban migration. Patra et al. (2023) [39] bring about the importance of influences of socio-demographic factors such as literacy, gender ratio, and income mere on access of basic services. The study boasts a statistically balanced gender sample based on a p-value of 0.585, which renders credible the findings of the current study. Thus, all the evidence points to UBA as a model that could be scaled sustainably for rural development, particularly in areas having logistical challenges. The study finds significant difference in caste composition stands between UBA and Non-UBA villages ($\chi2 = 14.85$ with $p = 0.0019$), with more OBC households residing in UBA villages and fewer in the others category. This implies UBA could work with caste structures for a matrix of inclusive development. In support of this view, Joshi et al. (2018) [40] demonstrate deeper economic inequalities within the jati that broad caste-wise policies tend to ignore. Deshpande and Khanna (2021) [41] find that SHGs do not significantly impact livelihoods but do facilitate the creation of social capital and the empowerment of women. Taken together, these findings highlight the need for site and socially appreciative programme designs. Malathi et al. (2022) [42] demonstrated how blockchain and IoT integration in the PDS enhances transparency and efficiency, reducing corruption and improving service delivery. The present study, however, shows that Aadhaar ownership and BPL classification rates remain uniformly high across UBA and non-UBA. This would mean that digital identity per se does not have differentiated impacts on the ground. This aligns with the findings of financial inclusion efforts in India between 2011 and 2021, where account openings, however much aided by Aadhaar, never really translated into genuine sustained usage primarily because of systemic and policy-layer constraints. Together, these insights point to the fact that although the digital infrastructure is a necessary ingredient, its usage has to be preceded by institutional reforms that have leeway for context-sensitive implementation. Moreover, Lalitha et al. (2025) [43] emphasized the significant role of HEIs in rural development under UBA through community-based innovations and technical interventions, despite challenges like limited funding and lack of trained personnel. Prakash (2024) [44] highlighted persistent issues in villages like Ahirpurwa, including poverty, inadequate housing, and poor sanitation, necessitating urgent infrastructural support. Educational trends indicate higher graduate rates in UBA villages, suggesting positive academic influence (Lalitha et al., 2025). Awasthi and Shrivastav (2017) [45] further noted that disadvantaged groups face layered socio-economic challenges. Together, these studies underline the need for structured training, stakeholder collaboration, and inclusive development strategies under UBA.

5. CONCLUSION

The study has underlined that Unnat Bharat Abhiyan has an important role to strategize socio-economic development in rural India. Empirical evidence from the comparative studies shows that villages adopted

by UBA are better off in levels of income generation, education access, healthcare, and community participation as opposed to villages that are not adopted. The analysis confirms that UBA interventions—with universities becoming involved in grassroots planning alongside technology transfer—act as catalysts for inclusive transformation of the rural landscape, which enhances household resilience and the development capacity at the local level. However, regional disparities, alongside lacking institutional readiness, continue to dilute UBA's overall achievability in ensuring context-sensitive implementation and continuous monitoring for the sake of equitable and sustainable rural development.

- **Practical Implications**

Indeed, the study contributes to the literature on rural development while bringing in some of the constituents of participatory planning, community-oriented intervention, and institutional collaboration in a broad framework to be able to analyze socio-economic transformation. The outcomes of this piece of research serve as an aid to politicians, institutes, and agencies accountable for rural development, bearing in mind the contextualization needs and the informed implementation of UBA interventions. The consensus and implementation of these recommendations would help the stakeholders to channelize development efforts into a congruent application of ground realities-the very intent of UBA putting beneficent change in the lives of people in diverse rural landscapes in the spans of livelihood, education, and health.

- **Limitations of the Study**

Despite its invaluable contributions, the study faces certain limitations. While the research covered multiple villages and had a reasonably sized sample, the socio-economic array of conditions in different rural tracts in India may never have been fully captured. Besides, given the study's cross-sectional nature, one cannot weigh the long-term sustainability or the changing impacts of the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) interventions with time. The presence of regional variations in policy implementation and differences in institutional engagement might also have unequally affected the outcomes. Therefore, one must be careful not to extrapolate such findings to all rural settings or assume that UBA works equally well throughout the country.

- **Future Research Directions**

Future research ought to use longitudinal studies to analyze the long-term socio-economic consequences of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) interventions. Comparative analyses across regions, agro-climatic zones, and institutional participation will supplement knowledge on the contextual elements that influence UBA's success. With such a wider scope, rural inclusive development could be dived deeper into. The inputs from such studies could lead to adaptive, community-specific, and scalable rural development models that marry national policy goals with local needs.

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