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Urbanization – induced factors affecting the livelihoods of marginal farm families

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Abstract

Rapid urbanization has become one of the major forces leading to gradual changes in agricultural systems and rural livelihoods. The present study aimed to assess the urbanization-induced factors affecting the livelihoods of marginal farm families in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana. The study was conducted using ex-post facto research design with a sample of 90 marginal farmers selected through a purposive random sampling procedure. The schedule was developed for the study. Frequency, percentage and correlation were used for analysis of data. The results found that urbanization has significantly affected the livelihoods of marginal farm families through economic, natural resource, social, institutional and technological factors. The correlational analysis revealed that education, annual family income, extension contact, mass media exposure and lifestyle habit changes were positively associated with livelihood affecting factors. The study highlights the need for strengthening extension support, improving access to information and institutional services, promoting livelihood diversification and implementing appropriate policy interventions to enhance and promote the sustainable livelihoods for marginal farm families in urbanizing regions.

Keywords: Extension contact, income diversification, life style habits, livelihoods, marginal farmers, urbanization

Introduction

Urbanization refers to the increasing concentration of population in urban areas and the transformation of rural regions into urban settlements, leading to significant changes in people's living and working conditions (Socio Health Population and Family Health Studies, 2024) ^[6]. Livelihood refers to the capabilities, assets, and activities that people use to earn a living and is considered sustainable when it can withstand stresses and shocks while ensuring well-being for present and future generations (Morse, 2025) ^[3].

In India, urbanization has steadily increased from 17.93 per cent in 1960 to 35.38 per cent in 2024. This rise reflects migration towards cities in search of improved livelihood opportunities and living standards (Worldstats, 2026) ^[11]. Telangana is experiencing faster urban growth compared to the national average. The urban population is projected to reach 50.08 per cent by 2026 and 57.60 per cent by 2036, indicating rapid structural transformation (Press trust of India, 2026) ^[4].

Ranga Reddy district, in particular, has emerged as a major peri-urban economic hub due to industrial expansion, IT development and infrastructure growth. It recorded the highest GDP and per capita income in Telangana during

2024–25, reflecting strong urban driven economic development (Telangana Government, Socio-Economic Outlook, 2026) ^[6].

Urbanization in India has been driven by several economic, social, governmental, environmental, and demographic factors. Economic opportunities, including better employment, higher incomes, and growth in the industrial and service sectors, attract people to urban areas. Improved access to education, healthcare, and better living standards, along with government development initiatives and expanding urban infrastructure, further promote urbanization. Environmental challenges such as droughts and declining agricultural productivity also encourage rural-to-urban migration. Additionally, rapid population growth and increasing demand for housing, employment and public services have accelerated the expansion of urban areas in India (Vajiram and Ravi, 2026) ^[9].

Materials and Methods

An ex- post facto research design was adopted for the study. The research was conducted in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana state was purposively selected due to its high level of urbanization and proximity to the state capital. A purposive random sampling technique was followed. Three

mandals from different directions of Ranga Reddy district namely Ibrahimpatnam, Shamshabd and Shankarpally were purposively selected. From each selected mandal three villages were randomly selected, resulting in a total of nine villages. From each village 10 marginal farmers were selected purposively. Hence, a total of 90 respondents were selected for the study. The data was obtained using structured interview schedule which was developed for the study. Data was analysed using frequency, percentage and correlation.

To know factors affecting livelihoods of farm families due to urbanization, the responses of farmers were measured on three-point scale: agree, neutral and disagree with the scores of 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The maximum and minimum possible scores were calculated and divided the class intervals, based on the scores obtained the respondents were grouped into three categories: low, medium and high.

Results and Discussion

The profile characteristics of the farmers include age, education, family type, annual family income, farming experience, extension contact, mass media exposure. The results were depicted in table 1.

The age of the respondents presented in table 1, it was revealed that exactly half (50.00%) of the respondents belonged to 50- 64 years, suggesting that most of the respondents were in their productive age. Farmers in these age group might have possessed better physical ability and work efficiency. The above results were in line with Talema and Nigusie, 2023^[7].

The education of the respondents depicted in table 1, indicated that nearly one third (32.22%) of the respondents were illiterate, followed by 30.00 per cent who had studied up to middle school. This might be due to limited educational facilities, poor economic conditions, early involvement in agricultural activities and lower awareness regarding the importance of higher education. The findings were consistent with Tuffour *et al.* (2023)^[8].

The family type of the respondents in table 1, showed that exactly half (50.00% each) of the respondents belonged to both nuclear and joint families. Half of the farmers belonged to joint families this might be due to the traditional rural family structure and the need for mutual support in agricultural and livelihood activities. At the same time, the increasing number of nuclear families reflects the gradual socio-economic changes taking place in rural areas. Rapid urbanization, migration to urban areas, changing occupational patterns, smaller landholdings may have encouraged to shift from joint to nuclear family systems. The findings were in accordance with results reported by Verma, 2021^[10].

The annual family income of the respondents showed in table 1, which revealed that nearly two thirds (65.55%) of the respondents had annual family income less than ₹1,00,000. This could be due to smaller landholdings, limited agricultural resources, low agricultural income and frequent price fluctuations in the market.

The farming experience of the respondents presented in table 1, it was found that nearly three fourth (72.22%) of the respondents had more than 20 years of farming experience. This might be due to their continuous involvement in agriculture as their primary occupation over generations.

Similar findings were in line with Anum *et al.* (2022)^[1].

The extension contact of the respondents showed in table 1, showed that more than half (51.11%) of the respondents had medium level of extension contact. This might be due to their occasional interactions with agricultural officers, extension personnel, input dealers and other agricultural information sources and limited awareness of extension services. The findings were comparable with Choudhury, 2021^[2].

The mass media exposure of the respondents presented in table 1, indicated that more than half (54.44%) of the respondents had medium level of mass media exposure. This could be due to increasing access to television, radio, newspapers, mobile phones and social media platforms, which facilitated the dissemination of information related to agriculture, markets, weather, government schemes, and other livelihood opportunities. The results were support with Reshma, 2022^[5].

Table 1: The profile of the farmers includes Age, Education, Family Type, Annual Family Income, Farming Experience, Extension Contact, Mass Media Exposure

S. No	Variables	Marginal farmers (n=90)	
		Frequency	%
Age			
1.	35-49 years	39	43.33
2.	50- 64 years	45	50.00
3.	Above 64 years	6	6.67
Education			
1.	Illiterate	29	32.22
2.	Primary School (up to 5 th)	21	23.33
3.	Middle school (up to 8 th)	27	30.00
4.	High school (up to 10 th)	10	11.11
5.	Intermediate or diploma or vocational	3	3.34
Family type			
1.	Nuclear	45	50.00
2.	Joint	45	50.00
Annual Family income			
1.	Up to ₹1,00,000	59	65.55
2.	₹1,00,000 – ₹3,00,000	31	34.45
Farming experience			
1.	10-15 years	8	8.89
2.	15-20 years	21	23.34
3.	More than 20 years	61	67.77
Extension contact			
1.	Low (10-16)	41	45.55
2.	Medium (17-23)	46	51.11
3.	High (24-30)	3	3.34
Mass media exposure			
1.	Low (5-7)	17	18.89
2.	Medium (8-11)	49	54.44
3.	High (12-15)	24	26.67

Table 2: Responses of the farmers on Lifestyle habit changes due to urbanization

S. No.	Lifestyle habits Changes	(n=90)	
		F	%
1.	Low (7-11)	5	5.56
2.	Medium (12-16)	50	55.55
3.	High (17-21)	35	38.89

The lifestyle habit changes of the respondents presented in table 2, it was revealed that more than half (55.55%) of the

respondents had medium level of changes in their lifestyle habits. This might be due to increased expenditure on food, housing, education, healthcare and transportation along with

changing work patterns and proximity to urban environment might have contributed to the modification of lifestyle habits among farming households.

Table 3: Responses of the farmers on income diversification due to urbanization

S. No.	Income diversification	(n=90)	
		F	%
1.	Agriculture	3	3.34
2.	Agriculture + Agriculture labour	29	32.22
3.	Agriculture + Animal husbandry	5	5.56
4.	Agriculture + Agriculture labour + Animal husbandry	5	5.56
5.	Agriculture + Non-farm employment	15	16.66
6.	Agriculture + Agriculture labour + Non-farm employment	26	28.88
7.	Agriculture + Pretty Business	7	7.78

Income diversification of the respondents presented in table 3, it was found that nearly one third (32.22%) of the respondents depended on agriculture along with agriculture labour, followed by 28.88 per cent of the respondents combined agriculture, agriculture labour and non-farm employment. This might be due to declining profitability in

farming, small landholdings, increasing economic pressure on resource poor rural farm families. Therefore, majority of the respondents depended on multiple sources in supplementing household income and ensuring livelihood security.

Table 4: Responses of the farmers on environmental degradation due to urbanization

S. No.	Environmental degradation	(n=90)	
		F	%
1.	Low (7-11)	-	-
2.	Medium (12-16)	57	63.33
3.	High (17-21)	33	36.67

The responses of farmers regarding environmental degradation presented in table 4, which was indicated that nearly two thirds (63.33%) of the respondents perceived medium level of environmental degradation. This might be due to increasing pollution, declining soil quality, water scarcity, waste disposal, loss of vegetation and changing climatic conditions might have contributed to environmental degradation. Expansion of residential areas, industries, transportation networks and other urban activities further intensified environmental degradation.

Table 5: Responses of the farmers on factors affecting their livelihoods due to urbanization

S. No.	Factors	n=90	
		F	%
Economic factors			
1.	Low (5-7)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (8-11)	13	14.45
3.	High (12-15)	77	85.55
Natural resource factors			
1.	Low (3-4)	0	0.00
2.	Medium (5-6)	20	22.23
3.	High (7-9)	70	77.77
Social factors			
1.	Low (4-6)	7	7.78
2.	Medium (7-9)	16	17.78
3.	High (10-12)	67	74.44
Institutional factors			
1.	Low (4-6)	14	15.56
2.	Medium (7-9)	29	32.22
3.	High (10-12)	47	52.22
Technological factors			
1.	Low (3-4)	24	26.66
2.	Medium (5-6)	46	51.11
3.	High (7-9)	20	22.23

The responses of the farmers regarding factors affecting the livelihoods of farm families due to urbanization presented in table 5, Regarding economic factors, which was showed that majority (85.55%) of the respondents belonged to high category. This might be due to increasing cost of cultivation, frequent market fluctuations, small land holdings, rising household expenditure, labour shortage and declining agricultural income had greatly influenced the livelihoods of farming households.

In the case of natural resource factors, majority (77.77%) of the respondents belonged to high category. The reason could be that climate variability such as irregular rain falls, water scarcity, soil degradation and environmental pollution had considerably affected agricultural activities and livelihood security. Rapid urban expansion and increasing pressure on natural resources might have further intensified these problems.

With respect to social factors, nearly three fourth (74.44%) of the respondents belonged to high category. This might be due to increased dependence only on agriculture increasing financial pressure, limited access to improved technologies and market information, migration, occupational mobility and changing aspirations of younger generations among farming households.

Whereas in institutional factors, more than half (52.22%) of the respondents belonged to high category. This could be due to their greater dependence on institutional support for accessing credit, subsidies, crop insurance, extension services and various welfare schemes. Such support might have helped farmers improve agricultural productivity, adopt improved farming practices, manage production risks, access livelihood opportunities and cope up with arising challenges due to urbanization.

Regarding technological factors, more than half (51.11%) of

the respondents belonged to medium category. The probable reason could be that limited access to modern technologies, inadequate technical knowledge, financial constraints, poor access to storage and processing facilities. Restricted the adoption of improved farming practices, advanced machinery and innovative technologies. The limited use of modern technologies might have reduced farm productivity, increased post-harvest losses, lowered production efficiency and restricted farmers ability to respond effectively to changing market demands.

Table 6: Relationship between independent variables and factors affecting livelihoods

S. No	Independent variables	Factors affecting livelihoods
1.	Age	0.021NS
2.	Education	0.523**
3.	Family type	-0.077NS
4.	Annual family income	0.296**
5.	Farming experience	0.159NS
6.	Extension contact	0.360**
7.	Mass media exposure	0.537**
8.	Lifestyle habits changes	0.429**
9.	Income diversification	-0.043NS
10.	Environmental degradation	0.114NS

** Significant at 0.01 level of probability.

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability

The correlational analysis of independent variables and the factors affecting livelihoods presented in table 6. The analysis revealed that education ($r=0.523^{**}$), annual family income ($r=0.296^{**}$), extension contact ($r=0.360^{**}$), mass media exposure ($r=0.537^{**}$), lifestyle habit changes ($r=0.429^{**}$) were positively and significantly related to factors affecting livelihoods. Education improved farmers ability to understand new information, adopt improved practices and make better livelihood decisions. Higher family income enhanced the capacity of households to invest in agriculture, diversify income sources and cope up with increasing household expenses and livelihood risks. Extension contact played an important role by providing technical information, support services, awareness of government schemes and relevant information that helped farmers adopt to changing conditions. Mass media exposure exhibited the strongest association, indicating that access to various communication channels increased farmers awareness of market information, technical innovations, non-farm employment and livelihood opportunities. Changes in lifestyle habits reflected the impact of urbanization on living conditions, consumption behaviour, living patterns and occupational preferences thereby affecting livelihood patterns. Overall, these variables enhanced farmers awareness, adaptive capacity and ability to respond to the socio-economic changes associated with urbanization.

Conclusion

Urbanization has brought significant changes in the livelihoods of marginal farm families. The study revealed that economic, natural resource, social, institutional and technological factors also played a major role in influencing the livelihoods. The findings highlighted the need for sustainable land use planning, strengthening extension services, improved institutional support and livelihood

diversification to enhance the resilience and livelihood security of marginal farm families in rapidly urbanizing areas.

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