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Manifesto Promises and Electoral Outcomes: A Comparative Study of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh Political Party Manifestos, 2014–2024

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ABSTRACT

Election manifestos are widely treated as instruments of democratic accountability, with greater specificity and verifiability in promises presumed to strengthen the link between campaign commitments and government delivery. This assumption remains largely untested at the subnational level in India, where welfare-driven, anti-incumbency-prone states offer a natural setting to examine whether falsifiable promises actually predict electoral outcomes or policy continuity. This study analyzes every election manifesto issued by the major governing and opposition parties in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh between 2014 and 2024, classifying 3,958 individual promises by policy sector and by whether each promise is falsifiable (specific and checkable against a later outcome) or non-falsifiable. Each manifesto is further compared against its party's subsequent manifesto to track which promises were repeated, escalated, or dropped, supplemented by ten semi-structured qualitative interviews across both states. Contrary to the assumption that falsifiability signals accountability, the party that went on to govern issued the least falsifiable major manifesto in five of the six election cycles, and governing parties' manifestos averaged 77.4% falsifiability against 87.4% for their rivals'. Because this rests on fifteen non-independent observations, it is reported as a descriptive pattern rather than a causal effect. A substantial share of each cycle's promises also reappear in the next manifesto rather than being resolved; in one case, a single infrastructure commitment persists unfulfilled across three consecutive manifestos over a decade. Interview evidence further reveals a split, cutting across state lines, between voters who condition their vote on fulfillment and those who dismiss manifestos as irrelevant regardless of outcome. This study offers the first systematic, cross-cycle comparison of manifesto falsifiability and fulfillment in these two states, showing that election manifestos function less as binding accountability contracts and more as broad, welfare-centered coalition-signaling documents.

INTRODUCTION

Political manifestos serve as the backbones of electoral systems in democracies, outlining the ideological commitments, policy priorities, and governance strategies of political parties. In India, the Election Commission of India defines a manifesto as "a published document containing a declaration of the

ideology, intentions, views, policies and programmes of a political party" (Election Commission of India, 2019). This highlights their legal and social importance in Indian elections, with political manifestos serving as signaling and prioritisation of voters' needs, especially in India (Centre for Policy Research, 2022). Research and analysis on national political parties such as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) highlights inconsistencies in policy delivery (Karwa et al., 2022). This, combined with varying degrees of fulfillment and various ways of avoiding accountability by making the policies vague or abstract in the manifesto, raises broader concerns about the importance of manifestos in elections, especially in India, if they do go unfulfilled. Manifesto promises are also not legally enforceable in India, which leaves voters as the main mechanism for holding parties to them (Raj & Kumar, 2024).

This study asks: does the falsifiability of a party's campaign promises predict its electoral success in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and if not, what do manifestos actually do instead? The sociological factors behind implementation, promise volume, and carry-forward patterns are examined as evidence toward answering this question, not as separate lines of inquiry. To answer it, the study pursues three objectives:

1. To evaluate the level of policy implementation shown in the manifestos by categorising falsifiable promises as Fulfilled, Partially Fulfilled, or Not Fulfilled.
2. To analyse the sociological factors influencing policy implementation, including government inefficiency, corruption, economic constraints, and opposition to the policy.
3. To understand how manifestos influence voter behaviour, and what role manifestos play in rallying local populations towards a party.

The Discussion is organised around the central question. Finding A tests the relationship between falsifiability and electoral outcomes directly, and Findings B to D examine what manifestos do instead.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The politics of electoral promises has emerged as a significant area of democratic accountability in many regions around the world, particularly in relation to whether political manifestos function as genuine policy commitments or merely as a means of rallying support around a party. Research on Indian political manifestos demonstrates that parties strategically construct promises using varying degrees of specificity and verifiability. One of the first studies on manifesto accountability in India (Karwa et al., 2022) chose to quantify the promises rather than look into their qualitative effectiveness. To understand manifesto delivery, researchers have classified promises as "falsifiable" and "non-falsifiable" based on whether their fulfillment could be objectively measured, arguing that manifestos containing more falsifiable promises are stronger instruments of accountability. The study found that the UPA's greater number of falsifiable promises did not necessarily translate into electoral success, suggesting that voters may not weigh parties primarily on manifesto implementation. Comparative international studies in other nations also reinforce this argument. In another study that involved the cross-national study of European and Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) democracies, Thomson et al. (2017) found that parties fulfill approximately 60–70% of manifesto pledges, although fulfillment is highly influenced by institutional conditions which may not be dependent or applicable to manifestos and are a lot more dependent on things such as coalition viability and feasibility of the bills. Coalition governments were found to dilute or renegotiate manifesto commitments, while single-party governments were more likely to implement their electoral agendas because they do not have to share power with coalition partners. Similarly, research on health priorities in Indian manifestos argues that parties often prioritize promises capable of mobilizing immediate voter blocs over long-term structural commitments such as healthcare reform (Rajeev et al., 2025), demonstrating that electoral promises are shaped not only by governance feasibility but also by short-term political incentives. Collectively, these studies suggest that manifesto commitments operate simultaneously as instruments of democratic representation, strategic communication, and electoral mobilization, with fulfillment dependent on institutional, political, and socio-electoral considerations.

Scholarship on state reorganisation and regionalism suggests that the reorganisation of political spaces can have a strong influence on the way identities are formed, political competition is structured, and developmental priorities are oriented in federal systems. Comparative research into territorial politics offers insights that the establishment of new administrative units tends to arise from linguistic, ethnic, cultural, or developmental needs, thus restructuring the state/regional population relationships. Research into federal restructuring in countries like India, Nigeria, Belgium, and Spain has highlighted the importance of the fact that once territorial recognition is achieved, regional identities become institutionalised in the political process, creating new patterns of electoral mobilization and regional party competition.

The literature on multiparty systems in India shows that political parties often adjust their manifesto strategies as a function of the political climate in different regions of the country and political identity amongst voters. A study of policy diffusion in Indian political parties (Nasrin, 2024) revealed that political parties sought to tweak religious and minority policies in line with the party in power at the national level. As an example, regional parties curbed religious sentiment in minority welfare policies when the BJP was at its apex and opposition parties enhanced religious sentiments in general when the BJP was electorally weak. This is consistent with larger regionalism theories (Tillin, 2013) that suggest that territorial reconfiguration and the spread of political influence set the stage for parties to reconceptualise identity narratives to cater to changing coalitions of voters.

Comparative scholarship also suggests that new states or regions often experience a heightened struggle to manage and distribute resources, to prioritize development, and to construct symbolic identities that are based on politics. State reorganisation is therefore not just an administrative process, but a political occurrence that changes governance priorities, identity consciousness, and electoral behavior in democratic systems. Welfare state theory investigates the formalisation of social protection "beyond the family" by analysing governmental actions and decisions in the fields of health, education, employment, and social security as well as the extent to which political agreement becomes administrative action.

According to classical welfare theorists, some of these factors influence the development of welfare systems, including ideological orientations, state capacity, economic resources, and political bargaining structures.

Comparative scholarship reveals that many democratic governments, without exception, make large promises of welfare provision at the poll in electoral campaigns, but that delivery of these policies is contingent on institutional capability, political incentive, as well as normative commitment. Researchers have studied election promises in European democracies (Thomson et al., 2017) and found that those pledges that are popular, politically viable, and actually affordable by the government are the most likely to become reality. Studies of election manifestos in India also show that while there are significant gaps between the coverage of welfare sectors, even when they are present, they are given an uneven treatment. Rajeev et al. (2025) analysed Indian political manifestos and identified that health infrastructure and health insurance were frequently discussed, but topics like health governance, public expenditure, and system-level reform in the long term were grossly underrepresented.

It is also claimed that political parties and voters alike have a short-term fixation on providing immediate welfare needs and in providing electorally visible schemes rather than long-term investments in institution-based welfare systems. Welfare state literature therefore indicates that how well welfare commitments are translated into policy outcomes depends on administrative capacities, electoral incentives, coalition politics, and the symbolic nature associated with welfare promises. This shows that welfare policies are not introduced for social need alone but rather as a result of negotiations between political acceptability, financial budgetary requirements, and institutional capacity.

While the field of welfare governance has received extensive academic scholarship and there is a significant amount of scholarship on manifesto politics and regionalism, there are still some academic lacunae that are hardly attended to. First, there is a dearth of literature on manifesto promises in general and in particular sectoral ones, such as health, that do not look at the intertwinement of multiple processes of regional identity construction, welfare states, and political restructuring that unfold at the same time. Second, although regional competition and identity politics are explored in studies of state reorganisation, such research rarely examines whether newly reorganised political units change the content of electoral promises and welfare commitments over time. Third, prior studies tend to treat manifestos as static documents at elections, rather than as political and policy documents that are constantly being revised or reshaped by institutional changes, regional goals, and popular sentiment. Moreover, there exists only limited scholarship on the actual implementation of these manifestos; many research papers fail to evaluate the implementation of manifestos with regards to continuity, or if and when a party was re-elected, did they fulfill the promise in their second term. Moreover, structural issues such as those that highlight fulfillment in opposition or if certain factors limited policy implementation are failed by these quantitative methods of evaluation. This research paper attempts to address these gaps in research through primary archival research and interaction with key stakeholders.

METHODS

The research method used is a mixed-methods research design that includes qualitative research using document analysis, archival research, and quantitative research using content analysis with an interpretivist approach. The interpretivist approach is suitable as the research aims to analyse the meaning-making process and the sense of welfare, development, governance, and regional identity that political parties give to these concepts through election manifestos, as well as the translation of these commitments into policy practices. The study adopts the principles of qualitative document analysis outlined in the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis, which describe manifestos, government documents, budget speeches, and policy documents as social and political texts that must be read in an institutional and historical context. Meanwhile, a quantitative element is integrated to systematically quantify the level of fulfillment of manifesto pledges, tracking to what extent they are realised, partially realised, dropped, or continued to the next election cycle. The qualitative interpretation and quantitative measurement enable the study to analyse political promises both in terms of their meaning and implementation.

The study is carried out in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, which comprised a single undivided state until bifurcation in 2014. These states are chosen because they offer a unique opportunity to consider the impact of state reorganisation on electoral pledges, welfare priorities, and policy enactment. They are both characterized by welfare-driven electoral politics, strong regional identity mobilization, and regularly changing political leadership, making them ideal for an analysis of the link between manifesto promises and governance outcomes. The data source is mainly documentary and archival data, such as election manifestos, government orders, guidelines for welfare schemes, budget speeches, legislative records, policy reports, and administrative documents issued by political parties and state governments between 2010 and 2025. To supplement this archival data, the study also covers 10 semi-structured qualitative interviews with citizens and policy observers across both states (four in Telangana and six in Andhra Pradesh), conducted on a voluntary and confidential basis to obtain a contextualized understanding of how these welfare commitments are perceived and implemented on the ground.

Documents are sampled using a purposive sampling approach so that they are directly related to the research goals. Manifestos and policy records are selected for their content related to welfare, education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, and regional development, and are analysed across both pre- and post-bifurcation periods. The dataset covers every manifesto issued by the major parties in both states between 2014 and 2024: the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS, renamed the Bharat Rashtra Samithi, BRS, in 2022), the Indian National Congress (INC), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Telangana (2014, 2018, and 2023), and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) in Andhra Pradesh (2014, 2019, and 2024), fifteen manifestos in total. The TDP's 2024 manifesto was issued jointly with its alliance partners, the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP. The

inclusion of these parties is based on their electoral importance and their impact on the policymaking process in the region.

Three data collection and analysis methods are used in the study: quantitative manifesto coding, qualitative document analysis, and archival research. Primary information is derived from government websites, budget speeches, welfare scheme guidelines, legislative proceedings, government orders, annual reports, election manifestos, and official policy documents. Academic articles, policy papers, newspaper archives, and reports by independent research institutes comprise secondary sources. Archival sources are especially significant as they allow for the study of historical policy implementation and checking political promises made in manifestos over several electoral cycles prior to and after the 2014 bifurcation. The quantitative portion is based on methods utilized in manifesto accountability studies and pledge fulfillment studies. The commitments made in each manifesto are retrieved and logged into a database. Each commitment is classified as falsifiable or non-falsifiable, depending on the availability of objective metrics against which fulfillment can be measured. For example, a promise to build ten medical colleges is coded as falsifiable, whereas a promise to enhance public welfare is non-falsifiable. The tracked promises are further coded as fulfilled, partially fulfilled, or not fulfilled, with additional variables documenting whether they were carried forward, modified, or dropped. This allows for the calculation of fulfillment rates across parties, sectors, and electoral cycles.

A promise was coded falsifiable if a later observer could determine whether it had been kept: it names a number, amount, deadline, or a specific deliverable (such as a named scheme, institution, or facility) whose existence can be checked. Promises that name only a direction of change, such as ‘increase’ or ‘strengthen’, were coded falsifiable when the change lay within the state government’s control, so that any change could be observed, and non-falsifiable when they depended on another actor (for example, ‘push the Centre to…’) or used aspirational verbs such as ‘encourage’, ‘take steps to’, or ‘strive for’ without a measurable target. A falsifiable promise was coded Partially Fulfilled when it was delivered in a reduced or modified form. Table 1 shows borderline promises from the dataset and how each was classified.

Promise (party, year)	Classification	Reason
“Increase the honorarium for cooks providing the midday meal” (YSRCP, 2019)	Falsifiable	No figure is given, but any increase can be observed and is within the state’s control.
“Push the Centre to significantly increase super-speciality PG medical seats in Telangana” (TRS, 2014)	Non-falsifiable	The outcome depends on the Union government, not the state.
“Encourage 1,000 MW/year of additional solar and wind power generation” (BJP, 2018)	Falsifiable	Aspirational verb, but it sets a measurable annual target.
“Encourage horticulture through various incentives” (INC, 2018)	Non-falsifiable	Aspirational verb with no measurable target.

Promise (party, year)	Classification	Reason
"Provide up to Rs 25 lakh financial support, regardless of income, for SC students pursuing education abroad" (TRS, 2014)	Falsifiable	'Up to' sets only a ceiling, but the scheme and its ceiling can both be checked.
"Take steps to raise groundwater levels through minor irrigation structures like check-dams on streams" (TRS, 2014)	Non-falsifiable	Names an activity but no quantity, location, or deadline.
"Waive all agricultural crop loans of farmers" (TDP, 2014)	Falsifiable; Partially Fulfilled	Delivered in reduced form: Rs 15,147 crore of the promised Rs 24,000 crore was disbursed.
"Pay a Rs 15,000/month honorary salary to Imams and Moazzams" (YSRCP, 2019)	Falsifiable; Partially Fulfilled	The honorarium was raised to Rs 10,000/month, below the promised amount.

Table 1: Borderline promises from the dataset and how they were classified.

Every classification was then checked in a second, independent coding pass, carried out separately from the first, and classifications were revised wherever the two passes disagreed. The coding was also validated by a research mentor, a qualitative researcher with over ten years of experience in ethnographic research.

Fulfillment could be verified only where a public record existed. Of the 579 falsifiable promises tracked across the four completed governing terms (the TRS's 2014 and 2018 terms, the TDP's 2014 term, and the YSRCP's 2019 term), 105 (18.1%) could be confirmed as fulfilled, partially fulfilled, or not fulfilled. The remaining 474 (81.9%) are reported as Unverifiable, and the fulfillment findings in this paper rest on the verifiable 18.1%.

Thematic and comparative document analysis is used in the qualitative portion. The coding procedures outlined in the SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis are followed to identify recurring themes, such as the expansion of welfare, healthcare, education, employment, agriculture, infrastructure, and regional development. Crucially, the study looks at the specific institutional and economic factors that shape implementation outcomes—such as financial limitations, administrative capacity, coalition politics, policy reprioritisation, legal challenges, changes in government, economic crises, and the fiscal impacts of state bifurcation. This allows the study to distinguish between unfulfilled promises due to executive inaction versus structural or institutional barriers.

The central innovation of this study is that it bridges the gap between manifesto promises and measurable policy indicators while preserving the qualitative meaning of political discourse. Each promise is monitored against government records, budget allocations, official announcements, legislative archives, state websites, and credible media reporting through the following year of a party's tenure. For instance, for a manifesto that guarantees a new welfare scheme, verification checks include whether the scheme was officially launched, budgeted, implemented, and maintained. This generates a longitudinal dataset

which can detect patterns of continuity, selective implementation, and political adaptation over time. This research study is based on documents that are readily available to the public and does not involve vulnerable populations. All interview subjects were recruited on a voluntary basis and informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by anonymising and securing all interview transcripts. Ethical standards also required that political claims be evaluated against policy outcomes using criteria that are transparent, objective, and replicable. The study makes an important contribution to the literature by integrating qualitative thematic analysis with quantitative pledge tracking to understand how state reorganisation affects subnational electoral politics and governance priorities in the post-bifurcation scenario.

RESULTS

The quantitative coding of the fifteen political party manifestos across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh is summarized in Tables 2 and 3 below. Table 2 details the Telangana manifesto dataset, and Table 3 details the Andhra Pradesh manifesto dataset, tracking total promises and falsifiability counts. Table 4 then sets each manifesto's falsifiability rate against whether the party went on to form the government. Full category-level breakdowns for every manifesto listed here are provided in Appendices A and B.

Party / Alliance	Election Year	Total Pledges	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
TRS	2014	353	228	125	64.6%
TRS	2018	26	19	7	73.1%
BRS	2023	19	16	3	84.2%
INC	2014	240	224	16	93.3%
INC	2018	872	826	46	94.7%
INC	2023	342	283	59	82.7%
BJP	2014	305	234	71	76.7%
BJP	2018	603	581	22	96.4%
BJP	2023	244	203	41	83.2%

Table 2: Telangana manifestos: total pledges and falsifiability.

Party / Alliance	Election Year	Total Pledges	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
YSRCP	2014	205	186	19	90.7%
TDP	2014	293	209	84	71.3%
TDP	2019	84*	65	19	77.4%
YSRCP	2019	138	123	15	89.1%
TDP–JSP–BJP (NDA)	2024	173	145	28	83.8%
YSRCP	2024	61	55	6	90.2%

Table 3: Andhra Pradesh manifestos: total pledges and falsifiability.

**Note: The TDP 2019 total is drawn from press reconstruction due to primary document retrieval constraints. Falsifiability rates represent the percentage of promises containing specific, measurable policy targets. The TDP's 2014 manifesto (293 promises) is included here as the baseline for the 2014–2019 and 2014–2024 carry-forward comparisons discussed in the Discussion and Appendix B.*

Table 4 lists all fifteen party-manifesto-election observations alongside whether each party formed the government after that election. The six manifestos of parties that went on to govern averaged 77.4% falsifiability, against 87.4% for the nine manifestos of parties that did not. These are the two figures reported in the Abstract and Discussion. In five of the six election cycles, the eventual winner issued the least falsifiable manifesto among the major contestants. The one exception is Andhra Pradesh in 2019, when the YSRCP won with a more falsifiable manifesto (89.1%) than the incumbent TDP (77.4%). In Telangana in 2023 the margin was narrow, at 0.5 to 1.5 percentage points.

State	Election	Party / Alliance	% Falsifiable	Formed Government
Telangana	2014	TRS	64.6%	Yes
Telangana	2014	INC	93.3%	No
Telangana	2014	BJP	76.7%	No
Telangana	2018	TRS	73.1%	Yes
Telangana	2018	INC	94.7%	No
Telangana	2018	BJP	96.4%	No
Telangana	2023	INC	82.7%	Yes
Telangana	2023	BRS	84.2%	No
Telangana	2023	BJP	83.2%	No
Andhra Pradesh	2014	TDP	71.3%	Yes
Andhra Pradesh	2014	YSRCP	90.7%	No
Andhra Pradesh	2019	YSRCP	89.1%	Yes
Andhra Pradesh	2019	TDP	77.4%	No
Andhra Pradesh	2024	TDP–JSP–BJP (NDA)	83.8%	Yes
Andhra Pradesh	2024	YSRCP	90.2%	No
Mean, parties that formed government (n = 6)			**77.4%**	
Mean, parties that did not form government (n = 9)			**87.4%**	

Table 4: Manifesto falsifiability and post-election status, all fifteen observations.

Note: Means are simple averages of the manifesto-level percentages listed above. Across all fifteen observations, the point-biserial correlation between falsifiability and forming the government is $r = -0.54$. Because the same parties and states recur across cycles, the observations are not independent, so this figure is reported descriptively and no significance test is relied on.

DISCUSSION

This section returns to the study's central question: whether more falsifiable manifestos are rewarded at the polls and, if not, what manifestos do instead. Across six state election cycles in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (2014–2024), the eventual governing party's manifesto averaged roughly ten percentage points lower falsifiability than its rivals' (77.4% vs. 87.4%; Table 4). This suggests that voters in these states respond to broader, less specifically checkable governance narratives rather than rewarding parties for making more falsifiable, and therefore more accountable, commitments. That is a reversal of what much of the traditional manifesto-accountability literature (Karwa et al., 2022; Thomson et al., 2017) treats as the presumptively desirable direction. Because the pattern rests on only fifteen non-independent observations, it is reported descriptively rather than as evidence of a causal effect.

To contextualize this finding, it is necessary to identify which parties won across these election cycles. In Telangana, the TRS won the 2014 election and defended its victory in 2018, ruling until its defeat in 2023 by the INC. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP won in 2014, lost to the YSRCP in 2019, and reclaimed the state in 2024 through an alliance with the JSP and BJP.

Finding A: Falsifiability Does Not Predict Electoral Success

The first key finding is that the falsifiability rate of a manifesto shows no positive association with electoral victory in this dataset. There was a year-on-year increase in the falsifiability rate of TRS manifestos, rising from 64.6% (2014) to 73.1% (2018), and then to 84.2% for the renamed BRS in 2023, yet the party lost the 2023 election. The opposite was true for the INC in Telangana: when its falsifiability rates were above 90% (93.3% in 2014 and 94.7% in 2018), the party lost, but when its falsifiability rate dropped to 82.7% in 2023, it won the election (Figure A1). In this dataset, then, high specificity was not associated with electoral success, echoing the national-level finding that the UPA's more falsifiable manifestos did not reliably translate into victory (Karwa et al., 2022). A similar pattern was observed in Andhra Pradesh, where the TDP won the 2014 election with a manifesto that had a falsifiability rate of 71.3% compared to the YSRCP's 90.7%. The YSRCP's manifesto was the more falsifiable of the two in all three cycles. It lost in 2014 and suffered a historic defeat in 2024 to a less structurally specific joint manifesto, but it won in 2019, the one cycle in the dataset where the more specific manifesto prevailed (Figure B1). Interview respondents corroborate this, describing manifestos as "wish lists," "menu cards," and "marketing documents" rather than coherent blueprints for state governance.

Even minor players in the state follow this pattern: the BJP recorded its highest-ever falsifiability rate of 96.4% in Telangana in 2018, yet won only a single seat, whereas its seat share grew in 2023 when its falsifiability rate fell to 83.2%.

Finding B: Promise Volume, Welfare Orientation, and Fiscal Cost

If falsifiability does not win elections, the content of the manifestos suggests what they do instead. Promises are heavily segmented to target specific voting blocs, including farmers, Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Backward Classes (BC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), women, children, and minorities. In contemporary Indian politics, state election manifestos have increasingly transformed into competing catalogs of subsidies and welfare schemes, visible in the large 'Other' category in most of the manifestos studied here (Figures A2 and B2). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports that subsidies rose from 7.8% of states' total revenue expenditure in 2019–20 to 8.2% in 2021–22, and it has warned of rising spending on non-merit freebies (Reserve Bank of India, 2022).

Evidence from other developing democracies suggests why this kind of targeted inclusion might matter to voters. In a survey of 11,600 respondents across all sixteen of Ghana's regions, Akeliwira and Owusu-Mensah (2022) found that manifesto content, rather than ethnic or party alignment alone, had become pivotal in shaping votes, with voters favouring the parties whose policies promised them the greatest benefit. The manifestos of regional parties in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh appear to follow the same logic, appealing to marginalized minority groups on an unprecedented scale. This is particularly salient given that SC, ST, BC, and OBC communities comprise approximately 73% of the population in Andhra Pradesh and 83% in Telangana. However, the qualitative evidence suggests that extensive rhetorical inclusion does not automatically translate into stable, long-term political trust or uniform voting behavior among these diverse groups.

The sheer volume of promises points the same way. Unlike major OECD nations, where parties average between 70 and 120 verifiable pledges per election cycle (Thomson et al., 2017), Indian state-level manifestos contain far larger volumes of promises. While national-level BJP and INC manifestos hover around 150 pledges, the state-level manifestos in this dataset range from 19 to 872 promises (Tables 2 and 3), without any consistent relationship to electoral success.

In Telangana, the TRS and INC made 353 and 240 promises respectively in 2014. In 2018, the incumbent TRS slashed its promises to just 26, while the opposition INC, contesting as the lead partner of the Praja Kutami alliance that expected to win a majority (Ali, 2018), made 872 promises. Despite the massive gap, the TRS won a landslide, using its manifesto primarily as a short statement of past achievements. Incumbents in Andhra Pradesh also shrank their promise lists, as seen in the TDP's reduction from 293 (2014) to 84 (2019) and the YSRCP's reduction from 138 (2019) to 61 (2024), although both of those incumbents went on to lose. The pattern fits evidence that parties revise their platforms most when electoral pressure pushes them to, as it does for opposition parties trailing an incumbent (Spoon & Klüver, 2014). The TRS's 2018 strategy was reinforced by its high retention of successful welfare schemes, as 42.3% of its 2018 promises were repeated or slightly adapted from 2014, and by Telangana's strong gross state domestic product (GSDP) growth of 14.2% at current prices in 2015–16, its first full year in office, against 10.5% nationally (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, 2024).

This dominance of direct subsidy-focused welfare over long-term structural policymaking has fiscal consequences. Since 2022, the RBI, the Supreme Court, and the Election Commission have all scrutinized the fiscal sustainability of these election promises. The RBI's risk analysis of state finances flagged Andhra Pradesh among the most fiscally stressed states, with a rising subsidy share of revenue expenditure (Reserve Bank of India, 2022). In the 2024 elections, promises in the 'Other' category, which is dominated by welfare and social-security pledges, made up 61% of the winning TDP–JSP–BJP manifesto and 34% of the YSRCP's manifesto (Figure B2). The fiscal consequence is visible in state-level debt ratios. Andhra Pradesh's outstanding debt is estimated to reach 35% of GSDP by the end of 2025–26 (PRS Legislative Research, 2025a), and Telangana's 28.1% (PRS Legislative Research, 2025b), up from 25.05% and 14.4% respectively in 2014. Unlike the Netherlands, where an independent fiscal agency has costed party platforms before elections for decades to discourage unrealistic promises (Bos & Teulings, 2011), neither state has any independent check on the cost of manifesto promises. Qualitative interviews confirm this fiscal squeeze, with respondents noting that administrative funds are severely depleted after meeting direct cash-transfer obligations.

A clear example of this fiscal trade-off is seen in Telangana. Long-term infrastructure commitments like the development of four dry ports in Hyderabad (promised by both the INC and BJP in 2018) remain purely in the planning phase due to financial constraints. Direct benefit transfers (DBTs), by contrast, represent a massive fiscal obligation: the 2025–26 Telangana budget alone allocates Rs 18,000 crore to the Rythu Bharosa investment-support scheme for farmers (PRS Legislative Research, 2025b), placing severe pressure on state capital expenditure.

Finding C: The Flagship-Manifesto Model

A third pattern concerns how parties present their manifestos: the 'flagship' model, where campaigns revolve around a highly compressed, branded set of guarantees rather than the whole manifesto. In 2023, the INC campaigned almost exclusively on its 'Six Guarantees', in the same mould as the YSRCP's successful 'Navaratnalu' (nine flagship guarantees) platform of 2019 (which introduced Amma Vodi and YSR Rythu Bharosa) and the TDP's 2024 'Super Six' promises. This model concentrates political messaging, burying the hundreds of other promises in the document. The dataset shows what this costs human capital development: Public Education promises made up 12.5% of the INC's 2014 manifesto and 14.0% of its 2023 manifesto, while the TRS's share fell from 11.9% in 2014 to zero in 2018 (Appendix A). Local media coverage reviewed for this study (Times of India, Sakshi, TV9, Eenadu) focused overwhelmingly on the flagship cash payouts and direct subsidies. This mirrors national evidence that flagship welfare schemes draw disproportionate press attention: the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) received 37 to 212 times more newspaper coverage than earlier health programmes (Kalita & Croke, 2023). In practice, a manifesto's electoral work is done by a handful of headline guarantees, not by the full set of checkable commitments that falsifiability measures.

Finding D: Carry-Forward Patterns and the Bifurcation Asymmetry

The final pattern concerns what happens to promises between cycles, and retention differs sharply by party and state. Of the 353 promises the TRS made in 2014, only 11 were carried forward to 2018 (7 exact repeats, 3 improvements, and 1 extension), and the remaining 342 did not reappear. Crucially, 100% of its 2014 public education promises were dropped. The INC carried forward 63 promises between 2014 and 2018 (26.3% of its 2014 base) and 101 between 2018 and 2023, showing a higher degree of policy continuity, while the BJP carried forward 17 promises from 2014 to 2018 and 15 from 2018 to 2023. In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP carried forward only 18 of its 293 promises from 2014 into 2019, a retention rate of just 6.1%, which rose to 19% between 2019 and 2024. The YSRCP carried forward 38 promises from 2014 to 2019 (18.5%) and another 38 from 2019 to 2024 (27.5%). Those 38 made up 62.3% of its 2024 'Navaratnalu Plus' manifesto.

What survives is overwhelmingly welfare, and it survives by escalating. Table 5 traces the headline pension amounts each party carried from one manifesto to the next. Every stated figure is higher than the party's previous one, often roughly double it, which reflects an escalation-not-reinvention model rather than new policy. The YSRCP's Aarogyasri health coverage followed the same path, expanding from Rs 2 lakh to fully free treatment, and then to a Rs 25 lakh cap. Both Andhra Pradesh parties also carried the same unresolved, Union-dependent megaproject promise (the Polavaram irrigation project) across all three cycles studied, showing that some promises are structurally doomed to repetition.

Party (election years)	Pension	First manifesto	Second manifesto	Third manifesto
TRS / BRS (2014, 2018, 2023)	Old-age (Aasara)	1,000	2,016	3,016
TRS / BRS (2014, 2018, 2023)	Disabled persons	1,500	3,016	6,016
INC, Telangana (2014, 2018, 2023)	Old-age	1,000	2,000	4,000
INC, Telangana (2014, 2018, 2023)	Disabled persons	1,000	3,000	6,000
TDP (2014, 2019, 2024)	Old-age	1,000	3,000	4,000
TDP (2014, 2019, 2024)	Disabled persons	1,500	—	6,000
YSRCP (2014, 2019, 2024)	Old-age	700	3,000	3,500
YSRCP (2014, 2019, 2024)	Disabled persons	1,000	3,000	3,500

Table 5: Headline pension amounts promised in successive manifestos (Rs per month).

Note: Amounts are as stated in each manifesto. Telangana cycles are 2014, 2018, and 2023; Andhra Pradesh cycles are 2014, 2019, and 2024. The BRS's 2023 manifesto also promised to raise the Aasara pension to Rs 5,000 within five years. '—' indicates that no separate figure was stated. Source: author's coding of the manifestos listed under Primary Sources.

The divergence between the two states is directly traceable to the asymmetric terms of the 2014 bifurcation. Telangana inherited Hyderabad, which generated over Rs 34,000 crore of the undivided state's Rs 70,500 crore in annual revenue, leaving residual Andhra Pradesh with 58% of the population but a massive structural revenue deficit (Reddy, 2014). As state reorganisation literature (Tillin, 2013)

notes, this reshapes governance priorities: Telangana's manifesto task was rewarding an achieved statehood movement, whereas Andhra Pradesh's task was compensating for a lost revenue base and funding a new capital (Amaravati). This fiscal asymmetry helps explain the manifesto content. Both states' parties escalate the welfare amounts they control directly (Table 5), but Andhra Pradesh's manifestos also revolve around capital-city construction and Union-dependent commitments. These include Polavaram and Special Category Status, which was announced for Andhra Pradesh in the Rajya Sabha in 2014 but which the Union government later declined to grant (Danthala, 2018; Vegesna, 2018). Many of the Union's obligations under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 were still unmet when its ten-year window lapsed in 2024 (Sana, 2024). Telangana's manifestos, by contrast, focus on direct welfare schemes that the state government can unilaterally control and fund. However, a decade after bifurcation, the Foundation for Democratic Reforms warned of Telangana's fiscal trajectory shifting 'from advantage to vulnerability', as borrowed funds were increasingly consumed by recurring expenses and short-term welfare (Keshaboina, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study is bounded by several limitations that qualify how far its findings can be extended. The promise-extraction process relied on vision-based reading of scanned manifesto PDFs rather than machine-readable text, since every manifesto in this dataset used a non-standard Telugu font encoding that defeated conventional text extraction. In the densest documents, such as the TDP's 293-promise 2014 manifesto, this means the promise counts reported throughout this paper may be skewed by certain promises not being extracted from the text or other issues with the extraction. The falsifiable/non-falsifiable and Fulfilled/Partially Fulfilled/Not Fulfilled classifications, while applied consistently across all fifteen manifestos, still involve a degree of interpretive judgment at the margins, particularly for promises phrased with partial specificity.

The fulfillment audit itself is constrained by the evidentiary trail available to an independent researcher rather than an official auditor: of 579 falsifiable promises tracked across four governing terms, 474, or 81.9%, could not be confirmed either fulfilled or unfulfilled because no public government record, media report, or watchdog database addressed them directly, which means the true fulfillment rate could differ meaningfully from the 15% this study was able to verify. The ten semi-structured qualitative interviews, while providing genuine primary-source texture on voter reasoning, are a small, non-random sample (four from Telangana, six from Andhra Pradesh) and cannot be treated as statistically representative of either state's electorate; the qualitative contrasts drawn between respondents, however illustrative, describe patterns within this sample rather than population-level distributions. Finally, the point-biserial correlation computed between falsifiability and electoral outcome ($r = -0.54$; Table 4) rests on only fifteen party-manifesto-election observations that are not fully independent of one another, since the same parties and states recur across cycles, which limits the statistical validity of any inferential claim and is why this paper treats that finding descriptively rather than as evidence of a causal relationship. The Indian National

Congress was also excluded from the Andhra Pradesh side of this analysis entirely, since no standalone INC Andhra Pradesh manifesto exists for 2014, 2019, or 2024—the party contested those elections without publishing a dedicated state-specific document in the way the TDP and YSRCP did—meaning this study's account of Andhra Pradesh's manifesto landscape is necessarily limited to its two dominant regional parties rather than all contestants.

Despite these constraints, the primary and secondary data together speak directly to the three objectives set out at the start of this research. First, the evaluation of policy implementation is addressed through the falsifiability classification and fulfillment audit: the finding that only 87 of 579 falsifiable promises were confirmed Fulfilled or Partially Fulfilled, against 474 Unverifiable, highlights the immense challenge of tracking subnational governance in India. The carry-forward datasets show that unresolved promises simply reappear in successive manifestos, most starkly in the YSRCP's 2024 manifesto, where 62.3% of the document consisted of carried-forward 2019 material. Second, the sociological factors influencing implementation are explained by pairing primary data with secondary literature and interview evidence: state-finance data showing rising debt-to-GSDP ratios (PRS Legislative Research, 2025a, 2025b), together with the absence of any independent costing of manifesto promises of the kind described by Bos and Teulings (2011), help explain why promise fulfillment lags campaign commitments. Third, the study reveals that voters in these two adjoining states hold opposite theories of manifesto accountability, split between Conditional Accountability and Fulfillment Cynicism, driven by an information environment where a handful of flagship promises receive the vast majority of press coverage.

This research can be extended in several concrete directions. The interview sample should be expanded well beyond ten respondents and stratified deliberately across income, caste, and urban/rural lines, since the class-coded split observed between urban professional cynicism and rural reciprocity-based accountability in this study's small sample is suggestive but requires a larger, more representative sample to confirm as a genuine pattern rather than an artifact of who happened to be interviewed. Because this study's single largest limitation is the 81.9% Unverifiable share of falsifiable promises, a natural next step is to pursue government records directly through Right to Information (RTI) requests rather than relying solely on media and public-archive searches, which would meaningfully shrink that unverifiable share and produce a fulfillment rate closer to ground truth. Finally, a logical extension of this work would be to formalize it into a standing, publicly accessible tracker specific to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, along the lines of national trackers such as ManifestoWatch (ManifestoWatch, n.d.), updated each election cycle, so that the carry-forward and fulfillment patterns identified here can be tested against real data.

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APPENDICES

The tables and figures below report the full six-category promise classification (Women Empowerment, Farmers' Wellbeing, Public Healthcare, Public Education, Infrastructure, and Other) underlying the

falsifiability totals reported in Tables 2 and 3. Each manifesto's summary is drawn directly from the underlying promise-level classification dataset built for this study.

Appendix A: Telangana Manifesto Category Summaries

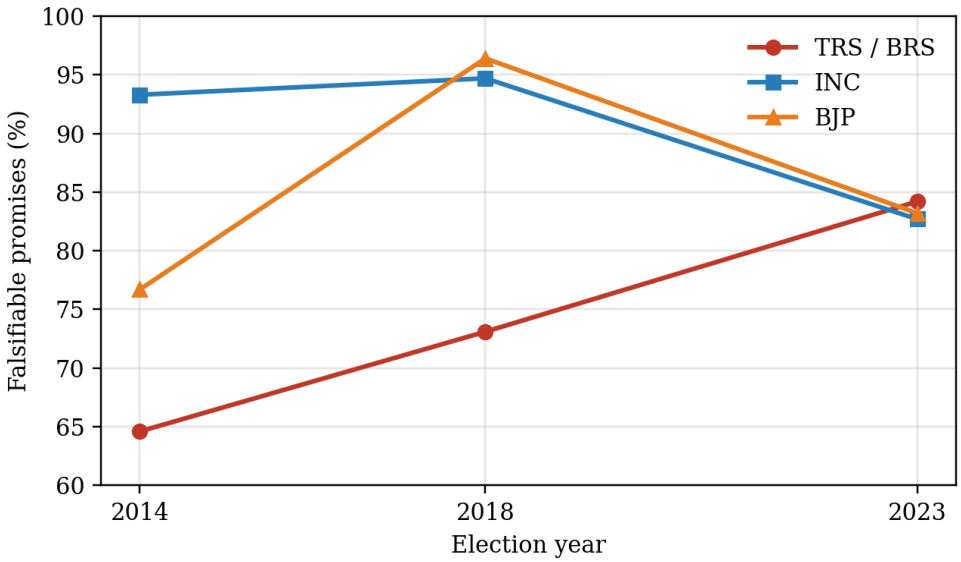


Figure A1: Share of each Telangana party's manifesto promises classified as falsifiable, by election year (data from Table 2).

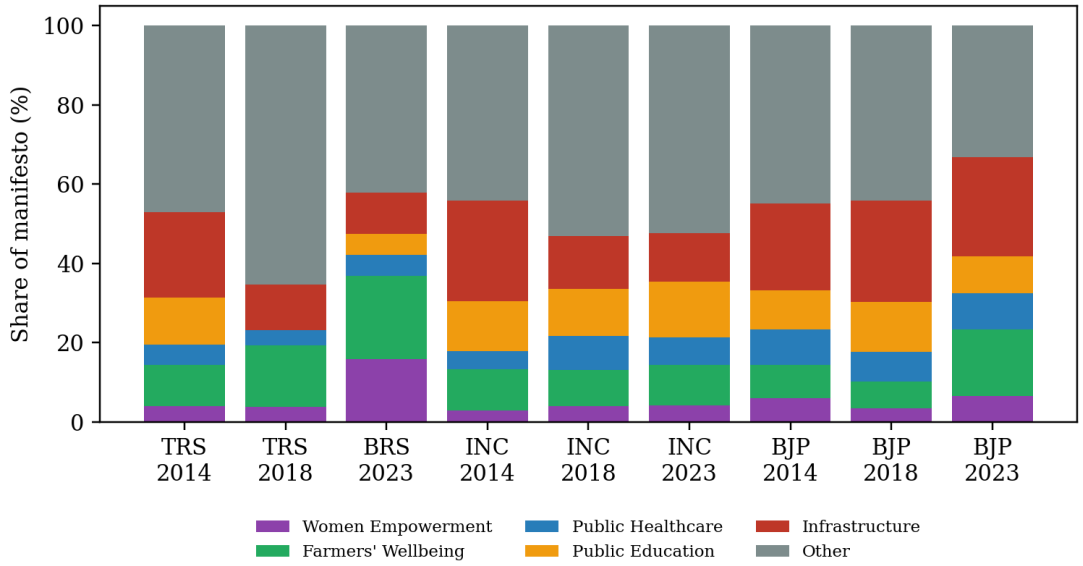


Figure A2: Share of each Telangana manifesto's promises falling in each of the six policy categories (data from Tables A1–A9).

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	14	10	4	71.4%
Farmers' Wellbeing	37	25	12	67.6%
Public Healthcare	18	11	7	61.1%
Public Education	42	31	11	73.8%
Infrastructure	76	57	19	75.0%
Other	166	94	72	56.6%
TOTAL	**353**	**228**	**125**	**64.6%**

Table A1: TRS manifesto 2014 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	1	0	1	0.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	4	4	0	100.0%
Public Healthcare	1	1	0	100.0%
Public Education	0	0	0	0.0%
Infrastructure	3	2	1	66.7%
Other	17	12	5	70.6%
TOTAL	**26**	**19**	**7**	**73.1%**

Table A2: TRS manifesto 2018 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	3	3	0	100.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	4	4	0	100.0%
Public Healthcare	1	1	0	100.0%
Public Education	1	1	0	100.0%
Infrastructure	2	1	1	50.0%
Other	8	6	2	75.0%
TOTAL	**19**	**16**	**3**	**84.2%**

Table A3: BRS manifesto 2023 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	7	7	0	100.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	25	24	1	96.0%
Public Healthcare	11	10	1	90.9%
Public Education	30	30	0	100.0%
Infrastructure	61	55	6	90.2%
Other	106	98	8	92.5%
TOTAL	**240**	**224**	**16**	**93.3%**

Table A4: INC manifesto 2014 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	34	32	2	94.1%
Farmers' Wellbeing	80	74	6	92.5%
Public Healthcare	75	73	2	97.3%
Public Education	104	97	7	93.3%
Infrastructure	116	114	2	98.3%
Other	463	436	27	94.2%
TOTAL	**872**	**826**	**46**	**94.7%**

Table A5: INC manifesto 2018 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	14	12	2	85.7%
Farmers' Wellbeing	35	29	6	82.9%
Public Healthcare	24	22	2	91.7%
Public Education	48	42	6	87.5%

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Infrastructure	42	37	5	88.1%
Other	179	141	38	78.8%
TOTAL	**342**	**283**	**59**	**82.7%**

Table A6: INC manifesto 2023 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	18	13	5	72.2%
Farmers' Wellbeing	26	23	3	88.5%
Public Healthcare	27	24	3	88.9%
Public Education	30	24	6	80.0%
Infrastructure	67	56	11	83.6%
Other	137	94	43	68.6%
TOTAL	**305**	**234**	**71**	**76.7%**

Table A7: BJP manifesto 2014 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	21	20	1	95.2%
Farmers' Wellbeing	40	40	0	100.0%
Public Healthcare	46	46	0	100.0%
Public Education	75	68	7	90.7%
Infrastructure	155	154	1	99.4%
Other	266	253	13	95.1%
TOTAL	**603**	**581**	**22**	**96.4%**

Table A8: BJP manifesto 2018 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	16	16	0	100.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	41	34	7	82.9%
Public Healthcare	22	19	3	86.4%
Public Education	23	20	3	87.0%
Infrastructure	61	48	13	78.7%
Other	81	66	15	81.5%
TOTAL	**244**	**203**	**41**	**83.2%**

Table A9: BJP manifesto 2023 (Telangana) — promise classification by category.

Appendix B: Andhra Pradesh Manifesto Category Summaries

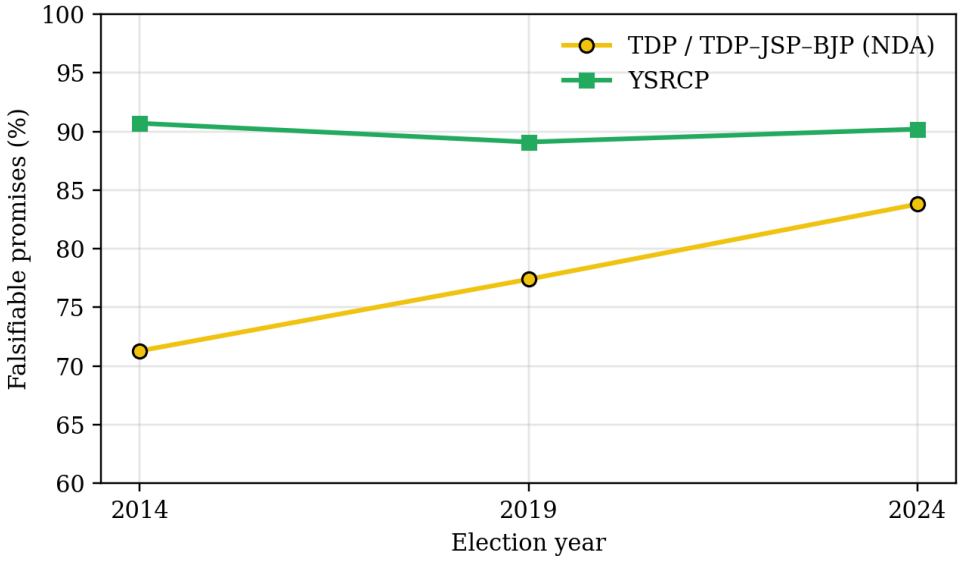


Figure B1: Share of each Andhra Pradesh party's manifesto promises classified as falsifiable, by election year (data from Table 3).

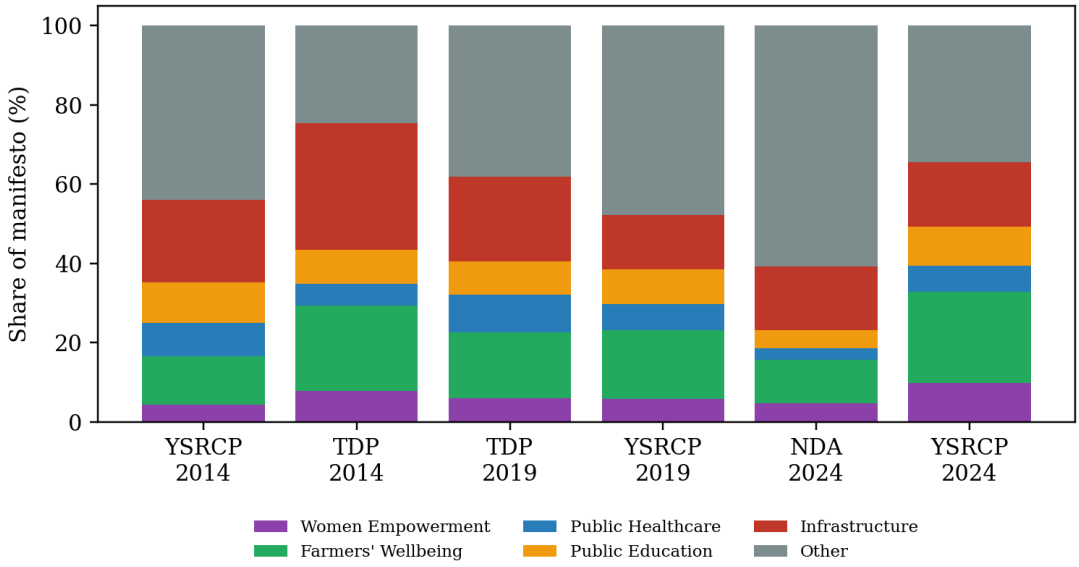


Figure B2: Share of each Andhra Pradesh manifesto's promises falling in each of the six policy categories (data from Tables B1–B6). NDA = TDP–JSP–BJP alliance.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	9	8	1	88.9%
Farmers' Wellbeing	25	23	2	92.0%
Public Healthcare	17	17	0	100.0%
Public Education	21	18	3	85.7%
Infrastructure	43	39	4	90.7%
Other	90	81	9	90.0%
TOTAL	**205**	**186**	**19**	**90.7%**

Table B1: YSRCP manifesto 2014 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	23	19	4	82.6%
Farmers' Wellbeing	63	46	17	73.0%
Public Healthcare	16	16	0	100.0%
Public Education	25	18	7	72.0%
Infrastructure	94	65	29	69.1%
Other	72	45	27	62.5%
TOTAL	**293**	**209**	**84**	**71.3%**

Table B2: TDP manifesto 2014 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	5	5	0	100.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	14	11	3	78.6%
Public Healthcare	8	7	1	87.5%
Public Education	7	6	1	85.7%
Infrastructure	18	12	6	66.7%
Other	32	24	8	75.0%
TOTAL	**84**	**65**	**19**	**77.4%**

Table B3: TDP manifesto 2019 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	8	7	1	87.5%
Farmers' Wellbeing	24	24	0	100.0%
Public Healthcare	9	9	0	100.0%
Public Education	12	11	1	91.7%

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Infrastructure	19	19	0	100.0%
Other	66	53	13	80.3%
TOTAL	**138**	**123**	**15**	**89.1%**

Table B4: YSRCP manifesto 2019 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	8	7	1	87.5%
Farmers' Wellbeing	19	16	3	84.2%
Public Healthcare	5	5	0	100.0%
Public Education	8	8	0	100.0%
Infrastructure	28	24	4	85.7%
Other	105	85	20	81.0%
TOTAL	**173**	**145**	**28**	**83.8%**

Table B5: TDP–JSP–BJP (NDA) manifesto 2024 — promise classification by category.

Category	Total Promises	Falsifiable	Non-Falsifiable	% Falsifiable
Women Empowerment	6	6	0	100.0%
Farmers' Wellbeing	14	14	0	100.0%
Public Healthcare	4	4	0	100.0%
Public Education	6	6	0	100.0%
Infrastructure	10	9	1	90.0%
Other	21	16	5	76.2%
TOTAL	**61**	**55**	**6**	**90.2%**

Table B6: YSRCP manifesto 2024 — promise classification by category.

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