



A Critical Analysis Of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme

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Abstract

Gender equality is widely acknowledged as a key component of human rights, yet achieving this basic right in India continues to remain a challenge. Gender equality is also essential for economic development. International agencies striving for gender equality have repeatedly pointed out that no nation can achieve robust growth without bringing its female population within the ambit of development. To address long-standing gender gaps, the Government of India launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme in January 2015. The key objectives of the BBBP scheme are to: (i) prevent gender-biased sex selection (ii) ensures the survival and protection of the girl child and (iii) promote education and participation of the girl child. The scheme was launched in 100 districts during the first phase covering all States and Union Territories. During the second phase, the Scheme has been expanded to 61 additional districts across 11 States and UTs. Currently, all the 640 districts in the country are covered.

Keywords: Gender equality, women empowerment, girl child

INTRODUCTION

Gender gap report 2024, India was placed at 124th rank among 146 countries in female education which covers literacy and enrolment rates in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. India's position has seen a relatively upward trend since 2018 which can be attributed to massive campaigns and interventions run by the government under its flagship programme 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (BBBP). The Government of India together with the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and Ministry of Human Resources Development launched Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme in 2015 with the key objective of improving the Sex Ratio at Birth in selected genders critical districts by two points in a year, reducing gender differentials in under five child mortality rate from 7 points in 2014 to 1.5 points per

year and increasing enrolment of girls in secondary education to 82 percent by 2018-19. The scheme was initially launched in only 161 districts and eventually covered all 640 districts of the country.

Objectives of the BBBP scheme:

- i) Improvement in the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) by 2 points every year.
- ii) Improvement in the percentage of institutional deliveries or sustained at the rate of 95 percent or above.
- iii) One percent increase in first trimester Anti-Natal Care (ANC) registration per year.
- iv) One percent increase in enrolment at the secondary education level and skilling of girls/women per year.
- v) To check the dropout rate among girls at secondary and higher secondary levels.
- vi) Raising awareness about safe Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM).

Need of BBBP Scheme

It is widely acknowledged that the main reason for son preference and the lack of girls' education in India is embedded in the very fabric of Indian society, which is male-dominated. Given that women's role is primarily centered within the house, the son's education takes priority. Further, the perception that daughters are to be given away in marriage and hence would not directly help their families. There is enough data and literature currently to provide evidence of gender-based discrimination against women and female children in India. This discrimination manifests itself in various forms, starting even before the girl child is born and continuing throughout her life. Women consistently relegated to an inferior status, it is no surprise that a male child is usually preferred over a female child. While the birth of a boy is widely celebrated in most families, the arrival of a girl is largely considered as a burden. Thereafter, the girl child is subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, in terms of healthcare, nutrition, and educational opportunities. Given the above situation and the existing skewed gender balance in the country, the government has taken various initiatives to improve girls' education. The BBBP scheme is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, with the nodal Ministry being the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The skewed sex ratio is a critical indicator of the low status of women in the country. Although the 2011 Census pointed to a rise in the sex ratio over the corresponding figure in the 2001 Census, it was still low at 940 females per 1,000 males. However, what is more alarming is a significant decline in CSR, calculated as the number of girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years. The CSR declined from 976 in 1961 to 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001, and further to 918 in 2011. The CSR has declined in 429 out of 640 districts in the country, implying that two-thirds of the country has seen a fall in the population of girls.

This unabated decline in CSR is a matter of great concern for the country, as it reflects both the pre-birth discrimination manifested through gender-biased sex selection, as well as post-birth discrimination against girl children. Several underlying factors contribute to low CSR. including the demand for exorbitant dowry, son preference, lack of equal inheritance rights for women, and concerns over the safety and security

of girls, among others. The pre-birth discrimination in the form of sex selection is facilitated by the easy, affordable, and widespread availability and affordability of pre-natal diagnostic techniques, which fosters their use across the country, whereas post-birth discrimination mostly emanates from the prevalence of patriarchal family structures. Despite the passage of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act, 1994, prohibiting the use of diagnostic techniques and sex-selective abortions, violation of this law through female foeticide continues to thrive in many parts of the country (Punam, 2014). Education is another key indicator and is the most powerful weapon for ensuring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girl children. However, though the female literacy rate in the country has been steadily increasing over the years, it is still lower than that for males, at 65.4 percent, as compared to 82.1 percent for men, as per the 2011 Census. The heartening news, however, is that the 2011 Census shows a substantial reduction in the gender gap for literacy. To promote female education, both the Central and several State governments have taken various initiatives, such as the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, which have helped improve the enrolment ratio of girls at all levels of schooling. The Gender Parity Index (GPI), which is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education to the corresponding number of male students at each corresponding level, also rejects the discrimination faced by girls in access to educational opportunities.

The issue faced by BBBP

Beti Bachao Beti padhao scheme involves poor Fund Utilisation, as accused by the committee on women empowerment. The scheme concentrated mostly on advertising the scheme and its awareness and reach rather than concentrating funds on the health and education of the girl children as promised by the scheme. A study conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research to evaluate whether BBBP programmes had been able to bring about the desired change in the 161 early-implementation districts found loopholes in the implementation process and identified structural barriers to girls' entry and retention in schools. Presented below are school-level indicators such as initiatives undertaken by the schools to identify the constraints faced by girls in continuing their education as well as to ensure the retention and continuation of girls till the completion of secondary school education. In the survey, 73.5 per cent of schools out of the total surveyed pointed towards the dual burden of care responsibilities, unavailability of clean functional toilets, inability to buy uniforms or books, and lack of safe commuting options as key constraints to girls' education.

Recommendations for better Implementation

- 1. Digitalisation** Mobile and internet penetration rates have almost skyrocketed since the pandemic. While technology has become essential for most basic functions such as education, payments, and communication, leveraging technology for monitoring and evaluation purposes is imperative. While media campaigns under the BBBP have had exemplary results in raising the issue of son preference, proper monitoring such as regular sampling, and quarterly progress reports on implementations would

be essential for forming better state-level and district-level policies aimed at improving the primary conditions that affect the health, survival, and education of girls.

2. **Increasing the number of female teachers** Incentivising educated females to join schools as teachers could ramp up female enrolment in schools. It would help in bringing in gender parity in terms of staff as well as ease of communication and comfort for female pupils.
3. **Female participation in the community-led scheme** Implementation of a gender-sensitive scheme should also involve gender representation. Community-level workers who often work in a close nexus with the people and know the community quite well should be the face of this scheme. Local frontline workers such as ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and Mahila Mandals should be key players in the implementation of the scheme.
4. **Training for on-ground personnel involved in community outreach activities** Refresher training and capacity building of the personnel employed on the field for community outreach is also important as they are more aware of the ground realities. Gender sensitisation training for personnel along with basic digital upskilling would go a long way in ensuring better implementation of the scheme.
5. **Provision of clean, functional toilets** According to a study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, the unavailability of toilets on school premises has been observed as a major cause of high dropout amongst female students. Ensuring the availability of toilets on public properties such as schools would help boost the enrolment rate.
6. **Portrait the actual picture of BBBP Scheme** to the front of society in local circumstances, there is no need to spend a lot of budgets on advertising and showing off.

Conclusion

The BBBP scheme has been successful in creating awareness in general. this scheme not only provides psychological support to the parents of girl children but also attempts to change attitudes and mindsets towards the girl child. Parents of girls were increasingly sensitised and have begun appreciating the vital role that girls can play economically and socially. they acknowledged that girls contributed in many ways, including bringing recognition to the country when they excel in their chosen fields. A large number of parents no longer perceive their daughters to be a burden. the BBBP scheme appears to have helped, at least to some extent, in changing the traditional mindset about girls being a liability for parents. The scheme in its present form is at risk of failing its central task due to poor implementation and monitoring. The lack of frequent meetings at the district and state levels can lead to the scheme losing the momentum it has created in the past few years. It is, hence, imperative for the district- and state-level action committees to have representation from community-level workers, cognizance of the challenges faced by the female students, and adept monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to have measurable outcomes indicative of the progress made on the objectives of the schemes.

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