



Reviving Shakti: Assessing The Impact Of Women-Centric Policies On Female Youth In Post-2014 Bharat

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Abstract

This research critically evaluates the impact of women-centric policies and yojanas introduced post-2014 on female empowerment and development in Bharat, with a focus on awareness and academic choices among female youth. The methodology involves a combination of purposive and convenience sampling of young women in higher education institutions, utilizing Google Forms for data collection. The analysis integrates primary data from surveys of college going young girls aged above 18 years of age ($n = 63$) and secondary data from government reports to assess policy effectiveness. The findings highlight the Maternity Benefit Amendment's significant improvements in maternity leave provisions and the Women Entrepreneurship Platform's role in supporting female entrepreneurs. However, gaps in policy implementation and awareness are evident. The Criminal Law Amendment Act has introduced stricter penalties for sexual offenses, aiming to enhance social security. Meanwhile, the Reservation Bill and the Triple Talaq Bill are examined in terms of their socio-political implications and contributions to gender equality. The study reveals that while these policies have made notable strides in empowering women, there remains a disparity in awareness and access among female youth, impacting their academic and career decisions. This research contributes to the literature on women's empowerment by providing empirical insights into the real-world outcomes of recent policies and offering recommendations for enhancing their effectiveness and reach.

Keywords: Female empowerment, Financial decision making, Security Issues, Views on politics and democracy

Introduction

An individual's life is intricately woven and molded by the edicts and policies of the state, which permeate every aspect of existence—from the choices one makes and financial stability to social standing, identity, and personal outlook. This impact is especially significant for young girls, who have long been subjected to societal norms and stereotypes. Historically, the role of women in society has been underrepresented and undervalued, leading to their marginalization and suppression. Thus, it is imperative to implement changes that reshape society, fostering an equitable distribution of rights and resources at all levels. This study aims to critically assess the effectiveness of women-centric policies introduced by the Indian government over the past decade. Bharat, with its rich history of valor and a legacy of colonialism, offers a unique context for such an examination. This research focuses on understanding these policies' impact from the perspective of young women, who represent the future reservoir of growth and talent in the country's quest for a developed and equitable society, or *Vikshit Bharat*. The Indian government has implemented several initiatives aimed at empowering women and addressing gender disparities. These policies encompass a range of areas, including maternity benefits, entrepreneurship support, legal protection against violence, reservation in political representation, and the abolition of discriminatory practices. Evaluating these policies involves not only analyzing their scope and implementation but also understanding the level of awareness among young women about these initiatives.

This research seeks to illuminate the influence of these policies on female empowerment and development, focusing on how they have impacted the lives of young women in terms of their academic choices, career aspirations, and overall social standing. Additionally, the study examines the effectiveness of communication strategies used by the government to disseminate information about these policies. By providing a comprehensive evaluation, this research aims to contribute to the literature on women's empowerment and public policy, offering valuable insights for future policy formulation and implementation.

Shaping Tomorrow: The Intersection of Policy and Youth Influence

The influence of state decisions and policies on youth is integral, shaping life choices, financial stability, social standing, identity, and personal perspectives. Youth participation in policy-making is not merely about the inclusion of young voices; it is a dynamic and action-oriented process that actively engages young people in institutions, initiatives, and decision-making processes. This involvement allows them to gain control over resources that significantly affect their lives (World Bank, 1994).

Policy-making by the state involves multifaceted efforts that encompass the organization of youth around issues they care about, initiatives by adults to involve young people in community agencies, and collaborative intergenerational partnerships between youth and adults (Checkoway, 2011). Legally, youth participation is often conceptualized as a "cluster" of rights. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2003), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines youth participation through various rights: the right to freely express views (Article 12), the freedom to seek, receive, and impart information (Article 13), the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Article 14), and the freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15). Participation and civic engagement are frequently used interchangeably, with civic engagement being described as allowing individuals to express their voices and contribute to the political functioning of their society (OECD, 2011).

The impact of state policies on youth extends to several critical areas. Firstly, these policies significantly benefit the development of young people's skills and self-perception as active citizens. State-led initiatives that encourage participation in civic activities foster the development of transferable non-cognitive skills and competencies. Civic engagement is instrumental in young people's personal development, equipping them with substantive knowledge and practical skills (Checkoway, 2011). Moreover, by engaging with peers through active participation, young people build social capital, an essential competency for collaborative actions that enable achieving objectives typically beyond the reach of a single individual (OECD, 2014). Furthermore, the involvement of youth in policy design and implementation ensures that state policies are more reflective of the needs and perspectives of young people, leading to more effective and inclusive governance. Young people bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to policy

discussions, which can lead to more effective and responsive policy outcomes. This active engagement not only empowers youth but also enhances the overall quality of democratic processes by ensuring that a broader range of voices is heard and considered in decision-making.

State policies that actively involve youth in their formulation and implementation are crucial for both the development of young individuals and the creation of effective, inclusive policies. By fostering skills, building social capital, and ensuring that policies reflect the needs of all segments of society, youth participation plays a pivotal role in shaping a more equitable and dynamic future. The legal frameworks provided by international conventions and the efforts of various organizations underscore the importance of integrating youth voices into the political and social fabric of society.

Bharat's Policy Renaissance: A Decade of Youth Empowerment and National Progress

Over the past decade, Bharat's policy framework has undergone transformative changes, particularly under the NDA-led government from 2014 to 2024. It has been marked by strategic initiatives aimed at fostering economic growth, enhancing digital and physical infrastructure, and improving social welfare. These policies have collectively empowered the youth by providing better education, employment opportunities, and access to essential services. The positive impacts on society, particularly in terms of economic empowerment, digital inclusion, and improved health and sanitation, underscore the success of these policy measures. As Bharat continues on its developmental trajectory, the sustained focus on inclusive growth and innovation will be crucial in furthering the nation's progress and ensuring a prosperous future for its youth and society at large.

Economic policies such as the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017 unified the national market by replacing multiple indirect taxes with a single tax, simplifying the tax structure, reducing business costs, and increasing tax compliance. This reform has bolstered the economy, facilitated job creation, and provided better opportunities for young entrepreneurs and professionals. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, launched in 2014, focused on financial inclusion by providing bank accounts to millions of unbanked citizens, thereby improving access to financial services and enabling broader economic participation. This initiative facilitated direct benefit transfers, ensuring subsidies and financial aid reached the intended beneficiaries efficiently.

Digital and technological advancements were driven by the Digital Bharat initiative, introduced in 2015, aimed at enhancing digital infrastructure and improving internet connectivity across the country. This policy has bridged the digital divide, particularly in rural areas, empowering youth with educational resources, online learning platforms, and access to global information networks. E-governance has made government services more accessible and efficient, reducing bureaucratic delays and corruption. Skill development and employment initiatives like the Skill Bharat mission, launched in 2015, addressed the skill gap in various industries by providing vocational training to millions, significantly improving employability and productivity. Social welfare policies, including the Ayushman Bharat scheme of 2018 and the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan of 2014, improved healthcare access and public health. Education and innovation were bolstered by the Atal Innovation Mission and the National Education Policy 2020, fostering a culture of innovation and holistic, multidisciplinary education. These policies have collectively empowered the youth, improved public health, and drove economic growth, laying a strong foundation for sustainable development and inclusive progress.

Empowering Women: Need for Societal Transformation

In the dynamic landscape of policymaking, initiatives specifically tailored towards women stand out as essential drivers of lasting societal change. This importance is particularly pronounced in the Bharat context, where historical norms and cultural dynamics have often marginalized women. Thus, the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at women's development and empowerment assume critical significance. Women in Bharat have long grappled with systemic barriers across various domains, ranging from limited participation in decision-making processes to deeply entrenched societal norms that curtail their opportunities for growth and advancement. In such a scenario, concerted efforts towards women's empowerment are not merely desirable but imperative for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

One compelling example from Bharat's past that underscores the significance of women-centric policies is the enactment of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act in 2005. This landmark legislation was a response to the pressing need to address the pervasive issue of domestic violence against women, which had long been ignored or dismissed as a private matter. The Act not only recognized various forms of violence within domestic settings but also provided legal recourse and support mechanisms for affected women. By acknowledging and addressing this widespread issue, the Act signaled a paradigm shift in societal attitudes toward gender-based violence and laid the foundation for broader initiatives aimed at women's empowerment. Beyond addressing immediate challenges such as violence and discrimination, women-centric policies have far-reaching implications for societal progress and development. When women are empowered through targeted interventions such as education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political representation, the benefits extend to families, communities, and the nation as a whole. Empowered women contribute to enhanced social cohesion, economic productivity, and sustainable development, thereby creating a ripple effect of positive change across generations. Therefore, this study endeavors to examine the effects of diverse women-centric policies within various domains and their consequential impact on the advancement of women and their decision-making prowess within the country.

Aim & Objectives

Aim

The aim of this research paper is to critically evaluate the impact of specific women-centric policies and yojanas introduced post-2014 on various aspects of female empowerment and development in Bharat. This includes examining the awareness levels of these policies among female youth and understanding their influence on the academic choices of female students.

Objectives

1. Critically Evaluate Specific Women-centric Policies and Yojanas Post-2014

This objective focuses on analyzing the scope, implementation, and effectiveness of key women-centric policies and yojanas introduced by the Bharatn government since 2014. The policies and initiatives under study include:

- The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017 (Maternity Amendment)
- Women Entrepreneurship Platform launched in 2018
- One Stop Centre and Universalization of Women Helplines
- The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2018
- Reservation Bill
- Triple Talaq Bill

2. Assessing the Level of Awareness Regarding Various Policies Among Female Youth

This objective aims to gauge the awareness and understanding of the female youth about the aforementioned women-centric policies and yojanas. It involves conducting surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with young women across different regions and socio-economic backgrounds. The assessment will help in determining the reach and effectiveness of communication strategies used by the government to disseminate information about these policies. Understanding the awareness levels will provide insights into the engagement and participation of the female youth in these initiatives.

3. Assessing the Impact of These Policies on the Academic Choices of Female Students

This objective seeks to explore how these women-centric policies and yojanas have influenced the academic decisions and career aspirations of female students. It involves analyzing enrollment data, academic performance, and choice of disciplines before and after the introduction of these policies.

The research will also consider qualitative data from interviews and case studies to understand the personal experiences and perspectives of female students. The goal is to determine whether these policies have contributed to increased educational opportunities, reduced gender disparities, and encouraged female students to pursue diverse and ambitious academic paths.

Rationale of the study

The rationale for this study stems from the need to understand the effectiveness and impact of women-centric policies and yojanas introduced by the Bharatn government post-2014. Despite the introduction of various policies aimed at enhancing female empowerment and development, there is limited empirical research assessing their real-world outcomes, particularly among young women in higher education. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a comprehensive evaluation of these policies and their influence on the lives of young women.

Table 1.1 Key areas and their description

Key Area of Impact	Description
Significance of Women-centric Policies	Evaluate the effectiveness and identify gaps in policies like the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, Women Entrepreneurship Platform, etc. for informed policy formulation.
Awareness and Engagement	Assesses the level of awareness among female youth regarding these policies to highlight communication strategy effectiveness and barriers.
Impact on Academic Choices and Career Aspirations	Explores how these policies influence educational opportunities, enrollment patterns, and career aspirations of female students.
Contribution to Existing Literature	Provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of recent women-centric policies, contributing to the literature on women's empowerment and public policy.

Methodology

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample ($n = 63$) for this study comprised young Indian women above the age of 18 who are currently enrolled in higher education institutions. This specific demographic was chosen to understand the direct influence of women-centric policies on young females who are in a critical phase of their academic and professional development.

The sampling technique employed for the study was a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was utilized to ensure that the study focused on a specific target audience that was most relevant to the research objectives. This approach allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who are directly impacted by the policies under review. Convenience sampling was also employed due to practical constraints, including time limitations and accessibility. This method enabled the inclusion of participants who were readily available and willing to participate in the study, facilitating a more efficient data collection process.

Data collection

Data collection for this study was conducted via Google Forms, an online survey tool provided by Google. Google Forms facilitates the streamlined collection of data by allowing participants to access and submit their responses electronically over the Internet. Offering a range of question types, such as multiple

choice, short response, and rating scale questions, Google Forms provides versatile options for effective data gathering. Additionally, responses are automatically recorded and organized in Google Sheets spreadsheets, simplifying data management and analysis processes. This tool enhances efficiency and convenience in survey administration, facilitating seamless data collection and analysis. No feedback or monetary reward was provided to the participants after the study.

Data analysis

The data collected through Google Forms served as the primary source for data analysis. This data was meticulously cleaned to ensure accuracy and reliability. To enhance and validate the findings, the primary data was supplemented with secondary sources, including numerous government reports from relevant Ministries and other credible sources. These secondary data sources provided additional context and depth to the analysis, enabling a comprehensive assessment of the policies' effectiveness and reach. By integrating both primary and secondary data, the analysis aimed to offer a well-rounded perspective on the influence of women-centric policies on the academic and professional trajectories of young women in higher education.

Data Analysis and Results

Theme-1: Carrier choices, Financial decision-making, and Entrepreneurship related issues

Carrier choices, financial decisions and entrepreneurship are an integral part of youth and their decision making in deciding their future trajectory of progress. However, this decision is bound by numerous factors such as societal expectations, available support system and response by the governments. It becomes a more tricky question when it comes to female stance on the same. The choice of female citizens are highly influenced by their family support, societal acceptance as well as schemes that offer them additional support. In line, assessment of the following policies was done.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment Act, 2017)

In the realm of career choices, financial decision-making, and entrepreneurship, the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act of 2017 emerges as a crucial policy framework that significantly impacts the trajectory of women in the workforce. Stemming from a historical continuum dating back to pre-independence times, the legislation finds its roots in the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, which initially aimed to provide essential financial assistance and job security to pregnant women across designated establishments in Bharat. However, recognizing the evolving needs and challenges faced by women in balancing their professional and personal lives, the Amendment Act of 2017 introduced substantial enhancements to these provisions, thereby reshaping the landscape of maternal support in the workplace. Central to the Amendment Act is the pivotal extension of paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, a landmark provision that acknowledges the physiological demands of pregnancy and childbirth while fostering a conducive environment for maternal health and infant care. This significant augmentation not only allows women ample time to recuperate postpartum but also facilitates crucial bonding moments with their newborns, laying a foundation for enhanced maternal and child well-being. Moreover, the Act's recognition of the diverse needs and circumstances of expectant mothers is reflected in the provision allowing up to 8 weeks of leave to be availed before the due date, empowering women to prioritize prenatal care and adequately prepare for the impending arrival of their child.

Beyond addressing immediate health concerns, the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act underscores the imperative of supporting women's seamless transition back into the workforce following childbirth. Mandating provisions for childcare facilities in establishments with 50 or more employees not only alleviates the burden on working mothers but also fosters an environment conducive to sustained professional engagement. Additionally, the Act's advocacy for work-from-home arrangements post-maternity leave signifies a progressive approach towards accommodating the evolving needs and preferences of working mothers, thereby ensuring continuity in career advancement while concurrently fulfilling familial responsibilities. Crucially, the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act of 2017 serves as a catalyst for promoting gender equity and inclusivity in the workplace, fostering an environment where women can pursue their career aspirations without compromising their maternal roles. By addressing the financial, health, and childcare needs of working mothers, the Act not only empowers women to make informed career decisions

but also cultivates a conducive ecosystem for entrepreneurship and professional growth. In essence, the legislation represents a paradigm shift towards recognizing and valuing the multifaceted contributions of women in the workforce, heralding a new era of gender-responsive policies and practices conducive to holistic societal development.

Student's response on maternity benefit amendment act also led to interesting findings. Though there was a lack of awareness of the schemes and its provisions among the young girls, but the majority of girls believe that there is significant positive change in perception of people regarding the working females since the launch of the amendment act in the past years.

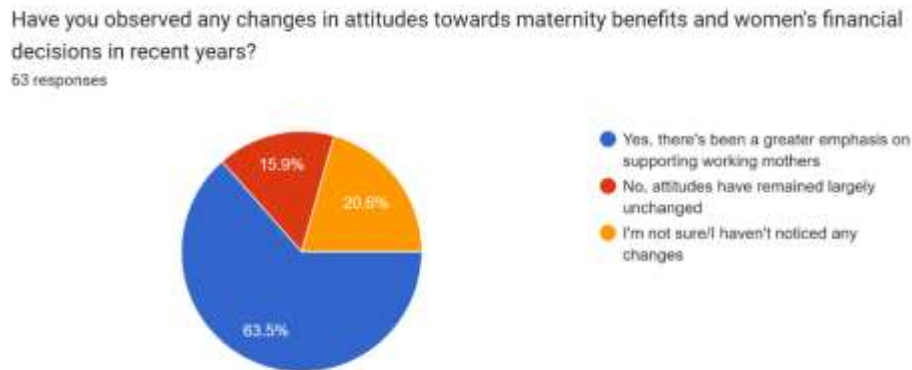


Figure 1.1 Students' response to Maternity Benefit Act, 2017

Women entrepreneurship platform (launched in 2018)

In 2018, the imperative for establishing a women entrepreneurship platform arose from the pressing need to narrow the gender gap prevalent in the entrepreneurial landscape. Startling statistics, such as Bharat's ranking of 57th out of 65 nations in the Mastercard Index on Women Entrepreneurship (MIWE) in 2017, underscored the urgency for concerted support measures. Thus, platforms like the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) were launched with the explicit aim of addressing this disparity by offering a comprehensive suite of resources tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs. WEP serves as a centralized hub, offering a myriad of support services designed to empower women across diverse regions and sectors. From skill development and funding assistance to mentorship opportunities and networking support, the platform functions as an aggregator, connecting aspiring and established women entrepreneurs with vital resources and opportunities essential for their entrepreneurial journeys. By fostering connections with stakeholders capable of addressing challenges and facilitating growth, WEP serves as a catalyst for women's economic empowerment and societal advancement.

Among its array of services, WEP provides crucial support in areas such as funding, incubation, acceleration, mentoring, networking, market linkages, and business development services. By curating information on government schemes, loans, and funding options, the platform enables women-led businesses to access vital financial resources necessary for sustainability and growth. Additionally, by facilitating connections with incubators, accelerators, mentors, and potential customers, WEP fosters an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial success and innovation. While precise data on the utilization of the platform by women entrepreneurs in 2018 remains unavailable, NITI Aayog reports a significant impact, with over 26,500 women registering and benefiting from the platform since its inception. Furthermore, NITI Aayog's broader initiatives aimed at empowering women, such as the Women Transforming Bharat Awards and a strategic focus on education, skill development, and micro-financing, underscore the government's commitment to fostering an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship and economic independence.

Findings substantiating the policies was received from the responses of the students such that more than 50 percent girl students believe that launch of the women entrepreneurship platform has led to significant rise in the female participation in business ventures and made business more accessible to female community. Moreover, a positive shift in the perception of student community towards such career choices could be found in through their responses.

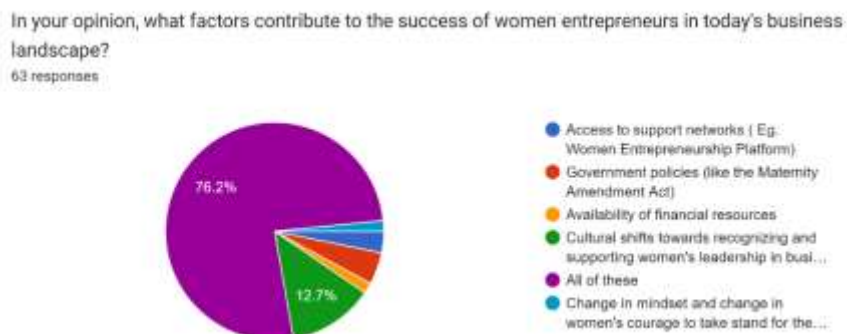


Figure 1.2 Students' response on WEP, 2018

Theme-2: Social Empowerment & Security related issues

Social empowerment and security are pivotal in ensuring that all individuals, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children, have the necessary support and protection to thrive. By examining policies, initiatives, and frameworks that promote social empowerment and enhance security, we can identify best practices and gaps in the current system. This understanding is essential for recommending effective strategies that foster inclusive development, reduce inequalities, and build a safe environment where every individual can exercise their rights and achieve their potential. Analyzing these issues will provide valuable insights in

The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2018

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2018 is a landmark legislation in Bharat, introduced to address growing concerns about sexual violence and ensure a more robust legal framework for the protection of women and children. The Act brought several significant reforms to the country's criminal justice system, aimed at enhancing the safety and security of vulnerable groups. One of the pivotal changes introduced by the Act is the increase in the minimum punishment for rape. The minimum sentence for rape was raised from seven years to ten years of rigorous imprisonment, with the potential for extension to life imprisonment. This significant enhancement underscores the severity with which the law views such crimes and serves as a strong deterrent against sexual violence.

Additionally, the Act imposes stricter penalties for the rape of minor girls. For the rape of a girl under 12 years of age, the minimum punishment is now 20 years of imprisonment, which can extend to life imprisonment or even the death penalty. Similarly, the rape of a girl under 16 years of age is punishable by at least 20 years of imprisonment, extendable to life imprisonment. These stringent measures aim to provide greater protection for minors and convey the serious consequences of committing such heinous acts. The Act also includes provisions to expedite trials and investigations in rape cases. Investigations must be completed within two months, and any appeals related to such cases must be resolved within six months. This emphasis on swift justice ensures that perpetrators are promptly held accountable, thereby reinforcing the rule of law and providing timely relief to victims. Moreover, the Act imposes stricter restrictions on bail for those accused of rape, making it more challenging for offenders to secure bail and potentially re-offend or intimidate victims and witnesses.

These reforms have significantly contributed to the security of females in Bharat by creating a more formidable legal deterrent against sexual violence. By ensuring harsher punishments, expedited judicial processes, and restricted bail provisions, the Act has bolstered the confidence of women and children in the

legal system, thereby encouraging their participation in public life and contributing to their overall development. However, legal reforms alone are not sufficient for social empowerment. Continuous efforts are needed to change societal attitudes, improve access to justice, and address the root causes of crime to create a truly safe and supportive environment for all. Further improvements could include comprehensive victim support services and more robust implementation of these laws at the grassroots level.

The findings of the students' survey, shedding light on students' perception, offered insights into how criminal law amendment act has positively addressed the security related issues among the female community and acted as a source of motivation for them to move out of their comfort zone and work in their desired fields. Participants' remarks such as, 'Bharat has seen significant initiatives aimed at improving women's safety and security, including stricter laws, dedicated helplines, and public awareness campaigns' speaks for the shifting perception of the policies and how it is impacting the mindset for females. However, there is still call for wider implementation of the law.

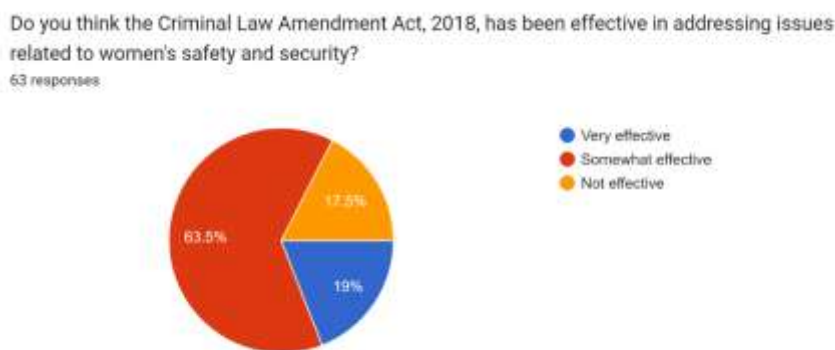


Figure 1.3 Students' response to Criminal Amendment Act, 2018

One Stop Centre and Universalization of Women Helplines

The Scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline (WHL) and the establishment of One Stop Centres (OSCs) are critical initiatives aimed at supporting women affected by violence in Bharat. These services provide immediate, 24-hour emergency responses and link women to appropriate authorities, such as police, hospitals, and legal services, via a single, toll-free number (181). The WHL aims to facilitate both crisis and non-crisis interventions by referring women to relevant agencies and providing them with crucial information about government schemes and support services available in their locality. The One Stop Centres complement the WHLs by offering integrated services under one roof, making it easier for women to access the help they need without having to navigate multiple agencies. OSCs provide medical assistance, police facilitation, legal counseling, psychological support, and temporary shelter, thus addressing the multifaceted needs of women facing violence. These centers are strategically located to ensure accessibility and are integrated with WHLs to streamline the referral process and enhance the efficiency of support delivery.

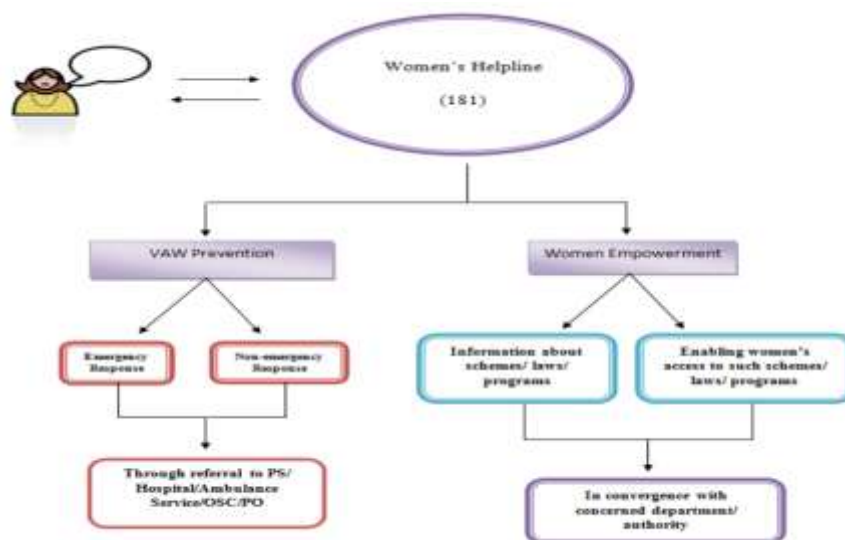


Figure 1.4 Diagrammatic presentation of Women Helpline (Ministry of Women and Child Development)

The primary objectives of the WHL are to offer a reliable 24-hour telecom service for women seeking support and information, facilitate crisis and non-crisis interventions, and provide information about local support services and government programs tailored to women's needs. By utilizing the existing infrastructure of state-level helplines, the WHL ensures a seamless integration and operational efficiency, making it a universally accessible service across all states and union territories. These initiatives are particularly beneficial to women as they offer a unified, streamlined approach to addressing violence, providing a safety net that is both comprehensive and readily accessible. Outreach and awareness-generation activities are vital components, ensuring that women are informed about these services and understand how to utilize them effectively. By creating a supportive and responsive framework, the WHL and OSCs significantly enhance the safety, security, and well-being of women, empowering them to seek help and reclaim their lives.

The findings of the research survey aligning with the objectives of the One stop centres such that more than 66 % young girls supports that community support network like these are essential for security as these provide immediate assistance and support to survivors of violence. However, there is a need to arise awareness about such initiatives and to equip young girls with the knowledge to use these systems when in need as this research survey shows more than 50 % of students are aware of the policy but are not sure of its usage.

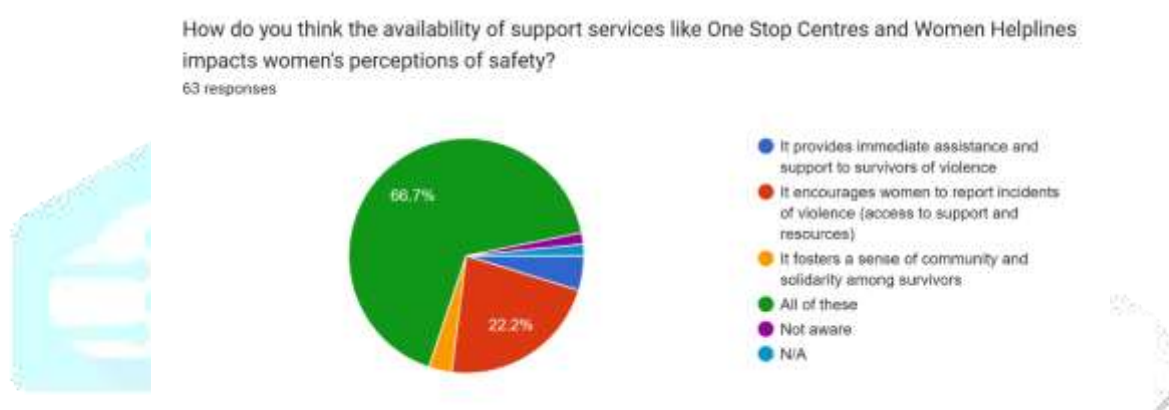


Figure 1.5 Students' response on One Stop Centres and Universal helplines

Theme-3: View of politics, Democracy & Belongingness to the country

This theme is integral to our research study as it explores the intricate relationship between political dynamics, democratic governance, and citizens' sense of belonging and national identity. Understanding how political institutions and democratic processes influence individuals' connection to their country provides insights into the effectiveness of governance and civic engagement.

Reservation bill (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023)

The Women's Reservation Bill in Bharat is a landmark legislative measure that aims to enhance gender representation in the political sphere, reflecting a significant stride in the nation's democratic evolution. The history of the Women's Reservation Bill dates back to 1989, with multiple attempts to pass it reflecting the contentious nature of the issue. In September 2023, the bill was finally passed by both houses of parliament, marking a significant victory for gender equity. This move aligns with broader reservation policies in Bharat, which aim to address historical disadvantages faced by various communities, promoting social justice and inclusivity.

The bill proposes reserving 33% of seats in parliament and state assemblies for women, addressing the longstanding underrepresentation of women in governance. Supporters of the bill argue that it is essential for achieving equality in representation and leveling the political playing field. They highlight the need for affirmative action to redress historical gender imbalances and ensure that women have a meaningful voice in the legislative process. From a democratic perspective, the bill embodies the tension between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. Democracy thrives on the principle that all citizens should have an equal chance to participate in governance. However, the persistent underrepresentation of women indicates that merely providing equal opportunities is insufficient to achieve true equality. Affirmative action, such as reservations, seeks to bridge this gap by ensuring a more equitable outcome, thus enriching the democratic fabric of the nation.

The passage of the Women's Reservation Bill is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging among women, affirming their right to equal participation in the country's governance. By enhancing representation, the bill not only empowers women but also strengthens the democratic ethos of Bharat. However, it is essential to continue efforts to ensure that reservations do not lead to reverse discrimination and that merit remains a cornerstone of the democratic process. This balance is vital for nurturing a truly inclusive and equitable society, where all citizens, regardless of gender, feel a profound sense of belonging and commitment to their country.

Research findings from the primary survey indicated how bills such as reservation bill supports different aspects of social inclusion and equitability. Though around 15 % students showcased their apprehension towards the bill as it might lead to backlash from certain communities of the society, but majority of students feel satisfied with the implementation of the bill.

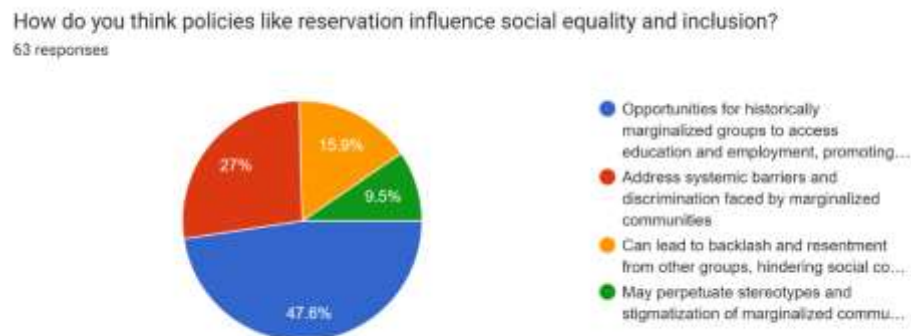


Figure 1.6 Students' response on Reservation of women in legislation, 2023

Triple Talaq Bill, 2019

The Triple Talaq Bill, formally known as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019, represents a significant step towards upholding gender equality and protecting the rights of Muslim women in Bharat. This law prohibits the practice of instant triple talaq, a form of divorce where a Muslim husband can divorce his wife by simply saying "talaq" three times. The passage of this bill is a landmark in the context of politics, democracy, and the sense of belongingness to the country. From a democratic standpoint, the bill addresses a critical issue of gender discrimination within the framework of personal laws. Prior to this legislation, the practice of triple talaq left many Muslim women vulnerable to sudden, unilateral divorces without recourse or financial security. By criminalizing instant triple talaq, the bill promotes gender equality and ensures a more just and equitable divorce process. This is crucial in a democratic society that values the principles of fairness and equal rights for all its citizens, regardless of gender or religion.

The bill also empowers Muslim women by providing them with greater protection from arbitrary divorce and ensuring their financial security post-divorce through a subsistence allowance from their husbands. This not only enhances their agency within marriages but also reinforces their sense of belonging and integration into the broader fabric of Bharatn society. By safeguarding their rights, the law affirms their status as equal citizens entitled to the same protections as everyone else. However, the bill has also sparked debate about religious freedom and minority rights. Critics argue that it interferes with Islamic personal law, which is a deeply ingrained aspect of religious practice for many Muslims. There are concerns that the bill could be perceived as targeting a specific religious community, potentially leading to feelings of alienation and marginalization.

Despite these concerns, the Triple Talaq Bill's significance lies in its commitment to social justice and the protection of women's rights, aligning with democratic ideals of equality and non-discrimination. It exemplifies the balance between upholding individual rights and ensuring that all citizens, irrespective of their religious background, feel a sense of belonging and inclusion within the country. Moving forward, it is essential to address the concerns regarding religious freedom while continuing to advance gender equality and protect the rights of all citizens.

The findings from the research survey highlights the perception of students on how the triple talak bill influences the issue of gender equality with more than 50 % students believes that laws like these challenge societal norms and provide legal protections to the sufferers against the orthodox belief system.

In your opinion, what role does legislation play in addressing cultural practices that may affect gender equality, such as Triple Talaq?

63 responses

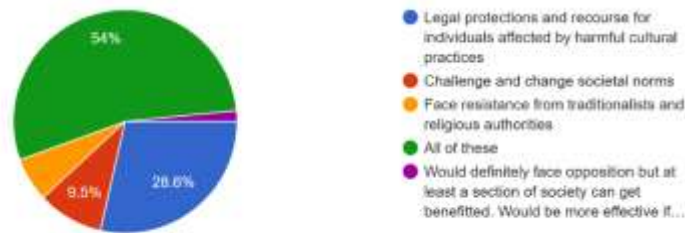


Figure 1.6 Students' response on Triple Talak Bill, 2019

Apart from these certain questions pertaining to sense of belongingness were asked from the students wherein the survey showed that more than 68% student community believes that a Shared cultural heritage and tradition that unite people across diverse backgrounds.

Discussions

The aim of the study was to critically evaluate the impact of specific women-centric policies and yojanas introduced post-2014 on various aspects of female empowerment and development in Bharat. This includes examining the awareness levels of these policies among female youth and understanding their influence on the academic choices of female students. In the same row, primary data via google form was collected from college going young girls aged above 18 years of age ($n = 63$) which was further substantiated with the help of secondary data obtained from government reports, investigations of numerous think tanks and other sources of data. The rigorous data analysis of the schemes delineated three different themes relating to finance, security issues and view on politics and democracy.

In the realm of career choices, financial decision-making, and entrepreneurship, while policies like the Maternity Benefit Amendment Act of 2017 and the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) have made significant strides in supporting women in the workforce, there is still room for improvement. One area of focus could be the implementation of these policies at the grassroots level, especially in rural and remote areas where access to information and resources may be limited. Providing targeted outreach programs and capacity-building initiatives can empower women in these regions to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

In terms of social empowerment and security-related issues, while measures such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2018 and the establishment of One Stop Centres and Universal Women Helplines have bolstered the legal framework and support services for women affected by violence, there is a need for greater coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders. Strengthening partnerships between law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, legal aid organizations, and civil society groups can improve the effectiveness of response mechanisms and ensure holistic support for survivors of violence. Additionally, investing in training and capacity-building programs for frontline workers, including police officers, healthcare professionals, and counselors, can enhance their ability to respond sensitively and effectively to cases of gender-based violence. By equipping them with the necessary skills and resources, we can improve the quality of support services and promote a survivor-centered approach to addressing violence against women.

In the realm of politics, democracy, and belongingness to the country, while measures like the Women's Reservation Bill and the Triple Talaq Bill represent significant strides towards gender equality and social justice, there is a need for broader structural reforms to address systemic inequalities and discrimination. This may involve measures to increase political participation and representation of marginalized groups beyond gender, including ethnic minorities, indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, ensuring meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels of governance is essential for advancing gender-responsive policies and promoting inclusive

development. This requires not only increasing the number of women in political leadership positions but also creating an enabling environment where their voices are heard, valued, and acted upon.

To sum, while the policies and legislative measures discussed have made notable progress in advancing gender equality, social empowerment, and democratic governance in Bharat, there is still much work to be done. By addressing gaps in implementation, addressing cultural and societal barriers, and promoting meaningful participation and representation of marginalized groups, Bharat can continue on its path towards building a more inclusive, equitable, and secure society for all.

Conclusion

The data analysis underscores the significance of comprehensive policy interventions in addressing critical issues related to gender equality, social empowerment, security, and democratic governance in Bharat. While legislative reforms have made notable progress in advancing women's rights, there is a need for greater emphasis on implementation, awareness-generation, and community engagement. The heightened level of awareness among college going students also speaks for the success of various policies of the government. However, by addressing gaps in policy implementation, challenging societal norms, and promoting meaningful participation of marginalized groups, Bharat can strive towards building a more inclusive, equitable, and secure society for all citizens.

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