



Asian Journal of Management and Commerce

E-ISSN: 2708-4523

P-ISSN: 2708-4515

AJMC 2024; 5(1): 279-283

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www.allcommercejournal.com

Received: 26-12-2023

Accepted: 27-01-2024

Tanishq G Jain

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Manthan H Jain

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Radhey Periwal

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Mukul Agarwal

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Praveen

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

Varalakshmi

Professor, Undergraduate
Students, Centre for
Management Studies, Jain
Deemed to be University,
Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Corresponding Author:

Tanishq G Jain

Undergraduate Students,
Centre for Management
Studies, Jain Deemed to be
University, Bangalore,
Karnataka, India

To what extent has Beti Bachao Beti Padhao been successful in impacting girl education in India?

Tanishq G Jain, Manthan H Jain, Radhey Periwal, Mukul Agarwal, Praveen and Varalakshmi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/27084515.2024.v5.i1d.268>

Abstract

The girls play a prominent role in the cultural, social, political, and economic life of a country. Our constitution gives great importance to the equality of status and opportunities for girls. This paper examines how girls' education can be enhanced through imparting information to all in various meaningful ways. Girls' education should be progressively considered in relation to national development. In this paper Beti Bachao, the Beti Padhao scheme has been briefly highlighted. Also the aim of this paper is to give some information to all readers regarding problems, challenges, and constitutional and legal provisions of girls. The national policy on education (1986) states, "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation." My paper wants to point out here that there cannot be educated men without educating girls.

Keywords: Women empowerment, educating the girl child, financial assistance, skill development, government initiatives, legal protection, social change

Introduction

Girl's education in India is a market failure and identifying effective strategies to address this market failure is an important avenue of research. Market Failure is defined as a situation where the market fails to allocate the resources optimally. Therefore, government intervention through methods like improving awareness and spending becomes essential to eliminate the welfare loss and achieve allocative efficiency. Education of girls in India is an example of market failure because it is under consumed and gives rise to positive externalities, for example by having a higher economic importance for the community.

In 2015, the Ministry of Woman & Child Development in conjunction with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Human Resources Development., under the Government of India, launched a nation-wide social campaign known as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the girl child, educate the girl child). It comprises of supply side reforms which aims to generate human capital amongst girls. The campaign was aimed at generating awareness and improving the efficiency of welfare and education services intended for girls in India. This scheme was focused primarily on six states in India. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, and Uttarakhand. The aim of the scheme is to act as a catalyst in promoting progress of girls' education in India by ensuring there is adequate participation and enough consultancy services (Such as human resource development) in the education sector.

In addition to promoting girls' education, the policy aimed to address the issue of the country's declining child sex ratio (CSR). CSR is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group 0-6. According to the census data gathered in 2001, the CSR in India was 927 girls per 1,000 boys, a lower value compared to the world average of 934 girls per 1000 boys (UNICEF). However, this ratio fell to 919 girls per 1,000 boys as measured by the census conducted in 2011. These numbers reflect the decrease in the female birth ratio. Education plays a key role in generating awareness amongst people regarding the reasons for the low CSR and the importance of addressing this issue and reducing the gender imbalance in society. It is therefore widely believed that India has been witnessing a declining CSR and under-consumption of girl education as a result of appropriate education.

This research paper aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme on girl's education in India from 2015 to 2019. To analyze the effectiveness, I will be discussing the change in the child sex ratio (CSR) in India after the introduction of this policy, the change in the enrollment ratio of girls at the secondary level of education, the effect of awareness campaigns and the utilization of funds amongst different sectors in the scheme.

Objectives of the study

To study role of rural women in economy.

To review available government offerings with respect to women empowerment.

Literature Review

The impact that Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme has had on girl education in India has stirred a lot of debate. The social campaign is run on raising awareness as it takes into consideration the cultural backgrounds and sociodemographic of the target audience. Awareness is particularly important in improving education rates because it improves attitudes towards gender empowerment. However, as suggested by Kumari *et al.* (2019)^[6], the lack of awareness amongst the girls and ladies in Hisar, Haryana suggests otherwise. While young girls are aware of their rights, their mindset of the ladies is still governed by the preexisting stereotypes. Kumari suggests that more girls were aware about the fact that boys are getting higher education in comparison to girls. However, the small sample size in the study cannot help us draw a conclusion for the entire population impacted by this policy. In my paper, I intend to expand upon the research done by Kumari *et al.* by considering the proportion of funds allocated towards awareness drives and other areas involved in this social campaign. While most of the funds are allocated towards advertisements, it puts into question the effect the policy has had on impacting girl education in India.

Menezes (2016) outlines the effect of gender budgeting on creating awareness about the importance of education. During 2014-15, while Rs. 100 crores (\$14 million approx.) have been spent on the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, the author finds that there has been a decline of more than one third allocation in the total amount allocated for women and child development in India. The government did not release the funds allocated towards this scheme. Gender budgeting is an important pillar which helps ensure that sufficient funds are spent to generate sufficient awareness needed to bring about a change in society. The findings of this paper help add validity to the findings of Parmar *et al.* (2020)^[8]. Parmar *et al.* argue that while the campaign is contributing towards better social empowerment on women through education, the preexisting notions and lack of awareness amongst some groups still question the impact of girl education. In my paper, I will expand upon the existing research done by Menezes and Parmar *et al.* by analyzing the effectiveness of gender budgeting on a set of alternate variables, primarily: the change in the child sex ratio and school enrollment ratio to understand if there has been a change in the attitudes of the people.

Data

To conduct my analysis, I would be analyzing the following variables.

Child Sex Ratio

The data has been taken from an official website managed by the Government of India for 2001, 2011, 2017, 2018 and 2019. Data for the other years was unfortunately not available. To minimize any errors in the data, the values have been rechecked from other several studies conducted by individuals and newspapers. These datasets have also been used by other researchers in conducting research about education more generally.

Enrollment Ratio

The data on the change in the enrollment ratio of girls in the secondary level of education has been gathered from the Ministry of Education and the World Bank data. I would be using data available from 2013 to 2019, to see any trends and improvements.

Effectiveness of Awareness Campaigns

By using the research conducted by Kumari *et al.* (2019)^[6] and Parmar *et al.* (2020)^[8], I would be analyzing if the campaign has been successful in raising awareness about social empowerment of women in terms of deserving and getting the same rights as boys. Combining data on government allocation of funds with data collected by Kumari *et al.* and Parmar *et al.*, I will analyze the effectiveness of awareness in changing social attitudes towards the girl child.

Utilization of funds

To further build onto the effectiveness of the campaign, it would be vital to analyze how the funds allocated towards this campaign have been utilized. The data has been collected from reliable newspaper articles which discuss this issue.

Results

In this section, I will discuss the data gathered for the various variables mentioned above to critically evaluate the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao program.

Child sex ratio

Table 1: Child sex ratio for various states over time.

State	2001	2011	2017	2018	2019
Uttar Pradesh	916	902	938	935	919
Haryana	819	834	914	914	923
Bihar	942	884	865	883	892
Uttarakhand	908	890	929	956	960
Delhi	868	871	918	929	934
Punjab	798	846	890	896	914

Source: Census of India for 2001 and 2011, Annual Report of the Civil Registration System (2019)

As discussed previously, India saw a declining CSR from 2001 through 2011. However, as can be seen for the states of Delhi, Haryana, and Punjab they witnessed an increase in the CSR. After the introduction of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao in 2015, a majority of the states saw a gradual increase in the CSR. One reason for this rise can be attributed to the increase in the sensitization towards gender discrimination pre and post birth (Ministry of Women and Child). Post the introduction of the program, Uttarakhand has seen the largest percentage increase in the CSR, a 3.34% increase from 2017 to 2019. In 2019, the district of Udham Singh

Nagar in Uttarakhand was felicitated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development for an improvement in the CSR. In Uttar Pradesh, the scheme has been implemented in 10 gender critical districts, out of which data isn't available for 4 districts. Hence, this could be one possible reason for a declining CSR in Uttar Pradesh. Interestingly, the district of Mau in Uttar Pradesh saw a 37.03% increase, from 694 females per 1000 males in 2014-15, to 951 females per 1000

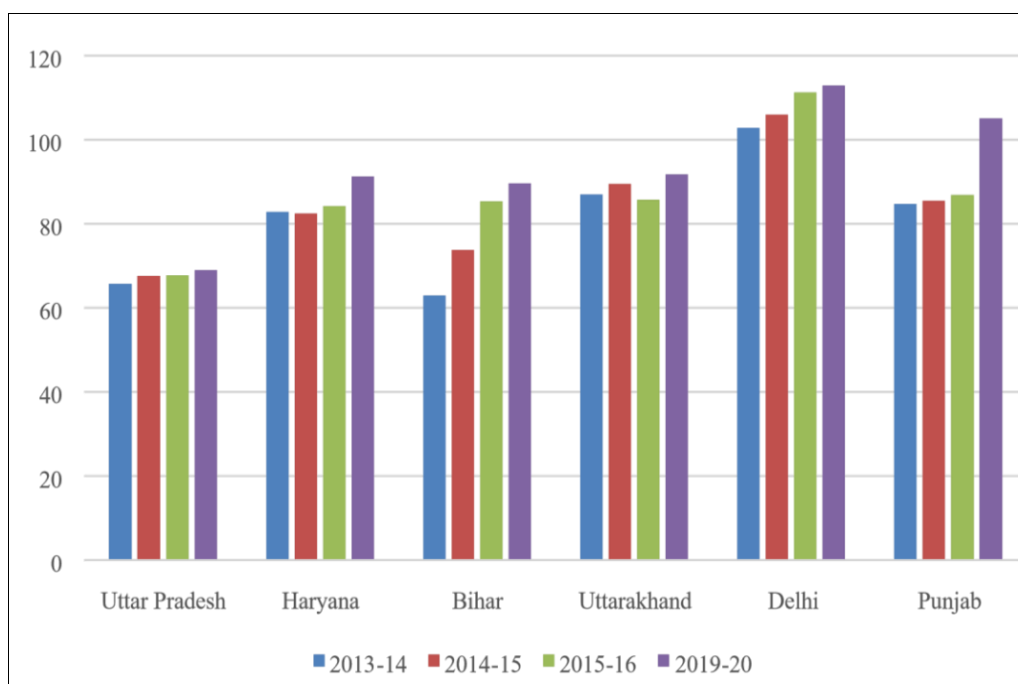
males in 2019-20. Easy access to technology for sex determination was an important catalyst in the declining CSR of Uttar Pradesh (The Tribune India). Here, awareness about saving the girl child amongst the people is vital, which I would be discussing further later.

Enrollment Ratio

Table 2: Enrollment ratio for girls in secondary education in India over time

State	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2019-20
Uttar Pradesh	65.79	67.73	67.86	69.1
Haryana	82.92	82.47	84.23	91.3
Bihar	62.96	73.85	85.43	89.7
Uttarakhand	87.01	89.56	85.73	91.8
Delhi	102.86	106.03	111.27	112.9
Punjab	84.74	85.59	86.97	105.2

Source: Ministry of Education, Government of India



Graph 1: Enrollment ratio for girls in secondary education in India over time

Enrollment Ratio for Girls in Secondary Education

Gross enrollment ratio (GER) for girls in secondary education is defined as the total percentage of girls in secondary education (Regardless of age), as a percentage of the total female population of secondary school age. Post the introduction of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao there has been a 3.87% increase in the gross enrollment ratio of girls at secondary level, from 77.45 in 2014-15 to 81.32 in 2018-19. As can be seen in the diagram, all the states show an upward trajectory post the introduction of the scheme in 2015. Many factors can be attributed to this increase related to the initiatives taken by the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign. One of the key factors has been the construction of separate functional toilets for girls in schools. In 2014-15 there were 92.1% functional toilets for girls, and in 2018-19 it increased to 95.1% (Unified District Information System for Education). Punjab saw the highest increase in the gross enrollment ratio from 2015 to 2020, a 20.96% increase. This has been attributed to the efficiency of the task force meetings deployed in 11 of the 20 districts in Punjab under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao districts of major concern

(NCAER). Task force meetings are district level meetings held by the committee responsible for implementing, developing, and monitoring Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme in the district. Delhi has the highest GER of 112.9 in 2019-20.

One of the main aims of this scheme is to generate human capital, which can be achieved through education and training. While a high enrollment ratio of girls in secondary education would suggest an increased participation in the educational activities, it is only the primary steps of education. A successful human capital would depend on whether the girls have attended the classes and have spent time learning. The Annual Status of Education Report issued in 2019 suggests that a large proportion of school-going boys and girls still have problems understanding basic arithmetic. For instance, in 2018 only 25.8% of the girls between the ages of 5-16 could correctly solve a division problem. While Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao program has been somewhat successful in increasing enrollment rates, the learning abilities of girls still appear to be falling behind. Furthermore, when considering the gross enrollment ratio, it

would be vital to consider the drop out ratio for girls too. From 2015-16 to 2016-17, the dropout rate for girls in secondary education increased from 16.6% to 19.81% (District Information System for Education, DISE). To sum up, while Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao was good at increasing enrollment ratio, some challenges remain because skills needed for an efficient human capital are still falling behind.

Effectiveness of awareness campaigns and fund allocation

Advertisements and awareness are the main pillars of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao. Awareness involves targeting the gender critical districts identified under this scheme and providing information about women empowerment and their basic fundamental rights. The scheme was targeted towards parents to broadcast the issue concerning the lack of girl participation in secondary educational units. According to

the survey conducted by Kumari *et al.* (2019) ^[6], an average of 1.75 ± 0.50 women in the Hisar village of Haryana agreed that in comparison to girls boys should get more opportunities for higher education. This number is significantly high and suggests that women are not fully informed about the statements related to the importance and meaning of gender empowerment. While this data represents only a small proportion of India, the same results have been seen for other states too. For instance, Pandey observed similar results for Uttar Pradesh too. The women were unclear of their rights, but effective training and awareness drives conducted for women made them more aware (Pandey). It is vital to consider the allocation of funds to further develop the argument about whether awareness has been an effective pillar in the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign.

Table 3: Distribution of Funds.

Year	Funds Allocated	Funds Released	Funds for media activities	Funds for media activities as a percentage of the total funds released
2016-17	43	32.7	29.79	91.10%
2017-18	200	169.1	135.7	80.25%
2018-19	280	244.92	160.13	65.38%
2019-20	280	200	125	62.50%

*All figures are in Rs. Crores

Source: Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, Ministry of Women and Child Development

As can be seen in the table above, the funds utilized for media related activities as a percentage of the total funds released for activities related to Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao have been declining since 2016. There has been a decline of 28.60%. In 2021, the Rs. 200 cores that were set aside for the scheme resulted in all the districts under districts of major concern to receive a total of Rs. 34 lakhs each. However, not all the funds were spent and hence puts into question how effective the spending has been. Underutilization of funds also poses grave problems. As of 2019, Uttar Pradesh has the highest unspent balance in the country. Rs. 8.28 cores. This unused balance could be channeled towards micro awareness drives aimed at increasing awareness regarding the low CSR in the state. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CA&G) report for 2017 showed that as against a target of Rs. 15 lakhs to be awarded to schools in Haryana for three districts identified, only Rs. 1 lakh were awarded for the years 2015-16.

Furthermore, it is vital to consider whether these funds have been utilized at the national, state or district level. According to the expenditure report released by the Women and Child Development Ministry for 2018-19, 43% of the funds were allocated towards media activities at the national level and 4% towards district level campaigns. 27% of the funds are diverted towards activities performed at the community-level, such as micro awareness drives.

However, only a rather small percentage, 5%, of the funds are allocated for education. This sheds light on how the funding is skewed towards only one of the strands of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign. A funds allocation through this approach would leave very little for spending on education and training, essential for the generation of human capital and development, in the future.

It is imperative that more funds are allocated towards districts and not state for awareness drives and campaigns. Such an approach could result in more efficient task force

meetings at the district level because it would allow them to use the resources to execute their campaigns. Moreover, it would make awareness about women empowerment feel more personal and thus effective. The small group talks that the task force can have with the natives would help strengthen the issues surrounding equal rights for girls. For instance, found that local radio advertisements were more effective than any other method of advertisement adopted by the government. Awareness is the steppingstone for bringing about a change in the education for girls.

Once there is an attitudinal and behavioral change observed in the people, it could make them seek educational activities for the girls.

Conclusion and Suggestions

After having evaluated the policy through the parameters of change in the child sex ratio, enrollment ratio, effectiveness of the awareness drives and the fund allocation, this paper gives the reader a comprehensive understanding the results produced by this program. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao has been a breakthrough scheme to ensure that the girl child is provided with equal educational and welfare opportunities as their male counterparts. While the enrollment rates and CSR show improvements, it is imperative to dig deeper and understand whether they reflect an underlying improvement in the human capital.

To ensure that the desired educational changes are seen, it is important to introduce other complementary policies which focus on specific reforms under the education sector. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao cannot work in isolation. Moreover, the funds allocated towards this program should be diverted from the national level to the district level for effective intervention and progress in the education aspect and in the attitudes of people surrounding women empowerment. Coupled with an effective utilization of the available technology, the progress can be monitored and analyzed

easily, and any issues identified and addressed early. Empowering the local women to join the task force for this campaign could make identification of local needs for girl education and welfare more accessible and comprehensive, acting as an incentive for other women.

In conclusion, this program has set the steppingstone for improvements in education and rights for girls in India. However, to continue such efforts, management needs to be more effective and work in conjunction with other policies aimed at similar goals. While the awareness campaigns have been able to shift the stereotypical mindsets, awareness alone cannot mitigate the problems. Awareness coupled with effective execution would be the key.

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