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A Policy Decision To Promote Gender Equality: Beti Bachao Beti Pado

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Abstract

Indian society is patriarchal and hierarchical, with men considered as superiors and women as second-class citizens in both the public and private spheres. A patriarchal social and ideological system places men above women in terms of decision-making and resource management. It creates inequalities and hierarchies that harm families, communities, and women in particular.

The birth of a girl child is not as celebrated by society as it should be since traditional thinking sees the male child as the only one who bears responsibility for the family. As a result, there is an imbalance in the sex ratio or a decline in the child sex ratio in India due to an increase in female foeticide, infanticide, and other types of homicide. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding of the significance of girls' education. One of the causes is that there is a dearth of knowledge on girls' education as a result of society's representation of women's roles as good wives and mothers of male offspring. Thus, an attempt has been made in this article to analyze the Central government's "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" initiative. This scheme has been introduced by the government to achieve a balanced sex ratio and an enhanced rate of literacy among Indian girls.

Keywords: education, violence against women, sex ratio.

In India, women's rights are often infringed because of their subordinate status. Violence against women is defined by the United Nations to mean "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Singh, 2015)¹. "Violence against women" is a common occurrence. It transcends caste, creed, religion, locality, and so on (Sharma et al., 2005)². In India, there are a lot of instances of women's rights breaches. The Indian society's patriarchal structure is the main cause of this. For millennia, women have been subjected to various forms of violence such as rape, domestic abuse, eve-teasing, acid assaults, molestation, kidnapping, and harassment related to dowries. Additionally, women have been victims of honour killings, sexual harassment, rape, and violence. Though it may take on various forms, violence on women is not new. Although there are several reasons why women are exploited, their ignorance of their rights is the main one.

Women continue to fight for equal rights in modern civilization, despite being an integral part of society. Violence against women continues despite the creation of numerous national and international organizations.

The progress and prosperity of women's conditions in India are also essential to the nation's overall development.

Beti Bachao Beti Pado: Its Importance

In Indian society, families prioritize spending money on their daughters' marriage over their education, depriving girls of their entitlement to an education. However, as they see the male child as their future and think that he alone will be responsible for the family, they place a high value on his education. (Sudhakar, 2018-19)³. The government and numerous volunteer organizations have also been putting up a lot of effort to support women's and girls' education, which is gradually having an impact.

In addition, a girl child's battle starts even before she is born. Concerning practices include female foeticide in India, where families might choose to favor sons over girls due to the accessibility of affordable abortion technology. "Even after they are born, girl children are subjected to discrimination and oppression. Therefore, in order to address the issue, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), which is centred on the protection and education of girl children (Parmar and Sharma, 2020)⁴.

PM announced the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme on January 22, 2015, at the national, state, district, and local levels with the goal of empowering Indian women by raising awareness in the community and rescuing and educating girls.

The program's objectives are to protect girls from gender-based sexual discrimination, to ensure their survival and development, and to guarantee their participation in education. The system has been extended to include every district in the nation through multi-sectoral initiatives.

In addition to the BBBP initiative, the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana was launched to address the financial components of a female child's overall success by covering costs of health, education, and other necessities. A savings plan specifically designed for girl children called the Sukanya Samridhi account has been introduced. Under this plan, parents or guardians can set aside money for their daughters' education or marriage. This account was designed to address the issue of girl children being perceived as a financial burden, and it has no tax deductions. (Dhanaraj and Sudha, 2019)⁵.

BBBP's strategy also includes a mix of advocacy campaigns, legal reforms and support systems which include community engagement that emphasizes on the role of communities, NGO's and governmental entities in fostering a supportive environment for girls, Education and awareness campaigns that include targeted initiatives to dispel stereotypes and promote the value of girl's education and equal opportunities and Healthcare initiatives that focus on enhancing healthcare services to ensure girls receive proper nutrition and medical care.

Diverse viewpoints on the campaign's efficacy and impact are held by participants, including activists, elected officials, and local communities. "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao"'s success is greatly influenced by parents. Although a lot of parents applaud the initiative and actively support their daughters' education, others, influenced by cultural norms, may still prioritize a son's education over a daughter's. Changing these mindsets requires sustained awareness campaigns and community engagement.

The usefulness of BBBP in combating gender-based discrimination has been demonstrated by its remarkable advancements in a number of regions. Haryana, which is well-known for having a lopsided sex ratio, saw a steady change in public perception as a result of strict law enforcement and community involvement, which increased the number of female students. In Rajasthan, awareness campaigns dispelling myths about female birthing and urging parents to support girls' education were made possible by grassroots involvement and partnerships with non-governmental organizations. New security protocols and self-defense programs for girls have created more favorable learning environments for them in places like Delhi. The specific requirements of tribal tribes have been met by tailored interventions in places like Jharkhand, improving the welfare of girl children through targeted healthcare and education programs.

Conclusion

Cultural norms and gender biases, as well as deeply ingrained patriarchal views, continue to undermine the functioning of the program despite its successes, especially in rural and economically poor areas. Progress is hampered in some areas by a lack of infrastructure and educational resources. Inadequate oversight and coordination can also have an impact on the program's impact and reach.

The following suggestions are essential to overcoming these obstacles: It is crucial to keep up efforts to alter society perceptions and elevate the importance of girl children, gender sensitization programs should be organized. Increased Access to Education, which comprises Infrastructure improvements, financial aid programs, and legislation that promotes girls' education can all assist keep more girls enrolled in school and raise educational standards. The program's reach can be increased, particularly in distant locations, by using digital platforms to deliver educational and vocational training. Working together with the business and nonprofit sectors can provide more resources and experience, which will increase the effectiveness of the program. Training and capacity building programmes should be organized for officials, health workers and different stakeholder so that they can contribute significantly towards achieving the targets of Beti Bachao – Beti Padao (Devi, Gupta and Verma)⁶.

The Indian government is making a major effort under Beti Bachao - Beti Padhao to empower females and advance gender equality via skill development and education. Even though the program has made a significant impact on improving girls' welfare and promoting awareness, ongoing efforts in resource allocation, policy enforcement, and community participation are necessary to address the deeply ingrained gender inequities.

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