

The Impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Initiative on the Lives of Girl Children in Dharmapuri

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KEYWORDS

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Gender Equality, Policy, Enrolment, Healthcare Access

ABSTRACT

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme was launched by the Government of India to address the declining child sex ratio and promote the welfare of girl children. Its primary aim is to improve the education, healthcare, and protection of girls while addressing gender biases and promoting equality. By fostering awareness, improving access to education, and ensuring better healthcare, BBBP seeks to empower girls and provide them with opportunities for a better future. The scheme also emphasizes creating a supportive environment for gender equality in communities and households across India. The study examines the implementation and impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme in Dharmapuri District, Tamil Nadu (2019-2023), where the child sex ratio stands at 911 girls per 1000 boys. Using mixed-method analysis of RTI responses, administrative records, and field surveys, the research evaluates the scheme's evolution from a centralized structure to a comprehensive multi-departmental framework addressing gender disparities. Findings indicate that significant variations in program engagement across age groups ($F=6.243$, $p=0.001$) and educational backgrounds ($F=9.345$, $p=0.000$), with strategic fund allocation increasing from Rs. 25,00,000 to Rs. 30,00,000 across eleven departments. While the study identifies implementation challenges including age-based disparities and educational barriers, it also highlights positive outcomes in healthcare access ($r=0.471$) and educational enrolment ($r=0.792$). The research provides evidence-based recommendations for enhancing BBBP's effectiveness through targeted demographic interventions to address persistent socioeconomic challenges facing girl children. The study adopted descriptive and survey methods to assess the impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative on the lives of girl children in Dharmapuri. These methods facilitated data collection on program engagement, outcomes, and demographic variations.

Introduction

From the long-time Indian society girl children have been grappling with large psycho-social issues¹. The girls in the family are much less satisfied than the boys. In contrast to boys of the same age, adolescent girls experience increased responsibilities in performing household chores, unequal exposure to the possibility of early marriage, and heightened vulnerability to violence based on their gender.² A study found that 39% of male adolescents at the age of 15 report being very content with their lives, while only 29% of female adolescents at the same age report the same level of satisfaction.³ Having girl children is an unnecessary burden as parents often perceive them as mere exploiters of their fragile wealth.

Female feticide and infanticide in India stem from deep-rooted gender bias, where unborn female fetuses face illegal abortion after sex determination, while female infants encounter deliberate neglect or killing. The Government launched "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" (BBBP) scheme in 2015 to combat these practices through awareness, education, and protection of the girl child⁴. Despite laws like PC-PNDT Act banning sex determination and BBBP's interventions, these practices persist in certain regions due to factors like dowry system and viewing daughters as economic burdens⁵. The combined impact of legal measures, BBBP scheme, and growing social awareness has shown positive results in some states, though continued efforts are needed to achieve gender equality and fair treatment of girls.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao has emerged as a major emblem in India's efforts to contain persistent gender disparities, especially in relation to access to and outcome for girl child, this integrated scheme seeks to combat age old social prejudice and ensure equal, fair, and affordable healthcare for all sections of the society. The BBBP has provided a major boost to the Tamil Nadu state in particular the Dharmapuri District wherein due to social norms the healthcare seeking behaviour of the girl children has remained a challenge hence it is still important as other initiatives. Healthcare issue of girl child in India, and the selected study area,

Dharmapuri District in particular, is multifaceted. Among these are; restricted health care, poor maternal care, nutrition, and preventive health care. Using this paper's combination of qualitative and quantitative data, socio-economic factors, disparities in education, and cultural practices that may reduce the likelihood of female children being taken to seek medical help have been said to be exacerbated by these factors. HBP initiative pays especial attention in these areas in a sequential model of health insurance and education⁶. Even though the Betis (daughters) of Tamil Nadu and particularly the Dharmapuri district are incumbent with child sex ratio of recently recorded 911 girls for 1000 boys the BBBP has been manifested as an important tactic for social change⁷. Based on a population of 1,506,843 inhabitants of 732,540 female the district offers an interesting context for understanding the impact of the government's gendered policy onto semi-urban and rural environment. As an outcome of education, healthcare and promotion BBBP, ICDS has covered 1,333 Anganwadi centres benefitting 635, 791 women and children, 51 Primary Health Centres and 225 sub centres in the district providing exclusive mother and child care services. On the education front, enrolment to the scheme opened schools to 19,976 girl participation at the primary level while 17,221 at the middle level and 88,751 high school and higher secondary levels mark a fresh ray of hope to access education. It has gone further than arithmetic changing attitudes and mobilizing community consciousness in the 10 blocks and 251 village panchayats⁸. An analysis of the demographic indicators realized in the empirical implementation exercise presents mixed results which show high literacy raw scores among females that differed by block and ranged from 48.32% to 60.44% respectively. While commendable successes have been recorded in some sub-sectors like the provision of scholarships, grant or health care delivery, socio-cultural factors remain decisive in the scheme's performance, requiring regular review and abating. The purpose of this study is to assess the multitudinal effectiveness of BBBP in addressing gender concerns and empowering the women of Dharmapuri District to ensure that all aspects in need of further BB interventions are indicated⁹. The study uses statistical findings and field work details to build a clear picture on how national policies affect the district level change and how gender biases have been tackled and how the welfare of the girl child has been enhanced.

Objectives

1. To evaluate initiatives under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana in Dharmapuri District.
2. To assess the effectiveness of efforts towards gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana in Dharmapuri District.

Statement of problem

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, launched by the Government of India, aims to address gender disparities and promote the welfare of girl children. In Dharmapuri District, where gender imbalances persist, especially in education and healthcare, evaluating the effectiveness of this initiative is critical. The study seeks to assess the initiatives under the BBBP Yojana in Dharmapuri District, focusing on their impact on gender equality and the socioeconomic empowerment of girl children. By analyzing programme outcomes, including changes in enrollment rates, health access, and community attitudes, the research aims to understand the extent to which these efforts have contributed to improving the status of girl children. The study evaluates the specific challenges faced in implementing the initiative and identifies areas for improvement. The research provides a comprehensive understanding of BBBP's role in enhancing the lives of girl children in Dharmapuri and offer recommendations for strengthening its impact.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Legal framework for women Empowerment in India

The legal framework for women's empowerment in India has developed over several decades, indicating a gradual change in public attitudes and an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity to tackle enduring gender inequalities. During the pre-independence period, initial efforts were made to address practices such as female infanticide; with British colonial authorities instituting measures included monitoring of female births and imposing penalties on families who did not register daughters¹⁰. Social reformers significantly assisted to raising awareness of concerns such as exorbitant marriage expenses that led to the devaluation of daughters¹¹. Indian Constitution adopted in 1947 some fundamental principles of gender equality which lead to further legal reforms. Into the 1970s, there were laws enacted including Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act to counter bad abortions. However, the misuse of prenatal sex determination with intent to practice sex selective abortions turned out to be a significant problem almost instantaneously¹². The 1980s and 1990s experienced heightened emphasis on women's political engagement, culminating in

1990s amendments that mandated a 33% reserve for women in local government entities¹³. The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC-PNDT) Act, enacted in 1994, aimed to outlaw sex determination and sex-selective abortion¹⁴.

The 21st century introduced various efforts designed to enhance protections for women and foster their empowerment. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act of 2013 were key achievements in this context¹⁵. Initiatives such as the Balika Samridhhi Yojana (1997) and Dhanalakshmi (2008) offered financial incentives to families with daughters, aiming to alter the notion of females as economic liabilities¹⁶.

The flagship programme BBBP launched in 2015 could be considered as another important step of India in altering a falling child sex ratio and female education and empowering girl child through integrated, multi-sectoral approach. BBBP aimed at improving the survival, protection and rights of girls through programming in health, education and social welfare, as well as an expansion of prior legal and policy work¹⁷. The initiative has significantly influenced key statistics, such as the Sex Ratio at Birth and the heightened enrolment of females in secondary education. The recent measures adopted in the Women's Reservation Bill that was passed in 2023 and for establishing 33% percentage of women in the national parliament and in the state legislatures. The purposeful step is expected to generate increase the number of women in decision-making bodies and help in formulating better gender-sensitive policies¹⁸. The history of legal protection of women empowerment in India showcases the continuities of the country's unyielding efforts to address structural. Gender discrimination through a combination of its policies, legislations, and programmes. The BBBP initiative essentially seeks to ensure that-girls survived, protected, and empowered through coordinated efforts by ministries and with adequate monitoring. As India improves this framework, it is on the path of arriving at near equality of the sexes and emergence of a society that each girl child can grow up to be.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

The BBBP project was launched in 2015 as a focused initiative to tackle alarmingly low sex ratios at birth and decreasing child sex ratios in India. The initiative seeks to guarantee that female children are born, raised, and educated without bias, enabling them to become empowered citizens with equal rights. One of its primary objectives is to establish a supportive atmosphere that guarantees the survival and protection of the girl child while advancing her education.

The initiative has had favourable results, especially in enhancing sex ratios at birth and decreasing occurrences of physical and/or sexual violence against women by intimate partners. Nevertheless, substantial obstacles persist. The financial allocation for BBBP has exhibited alarming patterns, with a reduction in funds from 2018-19 to 2020-21. In 2019-20, the sex ratio at birth was at 896 girls per 1,000 boys, much below the national objective of 954 girls per 1,000 boys by 2030 to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Implementation obstacles have hindered the scheme's efficacy. This include inadequate implementation and oversight methods, as well as misappropriation of funds. The initiative encounters specific difficulties in metropolitan regions, where the decrease in female-to-male ratios among children has been more pronounced (32 points) than in rural areas. This urban trend is alarming as it signifies heightened access to and utilization of sex-selective abortion technologies in metropolitan areas.

The execution of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative in Dharmapuri district exemplifies a thorough and methodical strategy for tackling gender-related issues. Between 2019 and 2023, the initiative has undergone substantial development under the guidance of the District Collector, showcasing a strong foundation for multi-departmental coordination. Originally initiated with a fund allocation of Rs. 25,00,000 in 2019-2020, the scheme's financial framework has since evolved to support several developmental facets. The implementation approach demonstrates meticulous consideration of several sectors, including education, health, social welfare, and law enforcement, collaboratively aimed at fulfilling the scheme's primary objectives of eliminating gender discrimination, insuring the survival of the girl child, and encouraging education.

The financial distribution pattern exhibits notable trends over the years, with the most important change occurring in 2021-2022 when the financing structure was dispersed across other departments. The smart allocation of resources has facilitated more focused initiatives across several sectors. The District Social Welfare Office has retained its status as the principal nodal agency, overseeing the majority of allocations while collaborating with other agencies to guarantee effective execution¹⁹.

Table 1: Year-wise Fund Allocation and Distribution Pattern in Dharmapuri District (2019-2023) Year

Total Allocation (Rs.)	Key Departments Covered	Notable Features	
2019-2020	25,00,000	District Social Welfare	Initial Implementation Phase
2020-2021	25,00,000	District Social Welfare	Continuation Phase
2021-2022	25,00,000	Multiple Departments including Education, Health, ICDS	Diversified Implementation
2022-2023	30,00,000	Five Major Departments	Enhanced Allocation Phase

Source: RTI Information

The case of implementing BBBP scheme in Dharmapuri district shows a complex interdepartmental model over a period of implementing from 2019-2023. As per RTI response No.1504/A1-DHEW/2024, the first phase was done centrally for the financial year 2019-2020 for an amount of Rs. 250,000 sanctioned only for the District Social Welfare Office. The same scenario was observed in the financial year 2020-2021 as the funds did not get utilized at all. The major shift was in 2021-2022 when the revalidated funds were spread across eleven departments in order to have a better structure of implementation. The highest amount of Rs. 6,65,000 was given to the District Social Welfare Office, health field got more concern of the state with Rs. 4,80,000 to Deputy Director of Health Services and Rs. 2,95,000 to Joint Director of Health Services. About Rs. 3,50,000 was provided to the Chief Education Officer for the sector of education and Rs. 3,00,000 were spent for implementation at the grassroots level on the part and parcel of the Department of Rural Development Office and Rs. 90,000 was spent on Block Development Office. Notably, the scheme was gender differential using Tamil Nadu Women's development Corporation of Rs., 75,000, child programmes through Department of Integrated Child Development Scheme of Rs. 1,25,000 and District Child Protection Unit of Rs. 35,000. Under awareness activities, the total amount of Rs. 85,000 was received by the Field Publicity Office²⁰.

The implementation structure was further refined in 2022-2023, with a streamlined allocation pattern focusing on five key departments and an increased total budget of Rs. 30,00,000. The District Social Welfare Office maintained its leadership role with Rs. 18,00,000, while the Chief Education Officer, Deputy Director of Health Service, District Child Protection Unit, and Police Department each received equal allocations of Rs. 3,00,000, reflecting a balanced approach to addressing various aspects of girl child welfare and protection²¹.

Table 1: Detailed Department-wise Fund Allocation under BBBP Scheme in Dharmapuri (2022-2023)

Department	Allocation (Rs.)	Department
District Social Welfare Office	6,65,000	District Social Welfare Office
Chief Education Officer	3,50,000	Chief Education Officer
Deputy Director of Health Service	4,80,000	Deputy Director of Health Service
Joint Director of Health Services	2,95,000	Joint Director of Health Services
Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation	75,000	Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation
Department of ICDS	1,25,000	Department of ICDS
District Child Protection Unit	35,000	District Child Protection Unit
Department of Rural Development Office	3,00,000	Department of Rural Development Office
Block Development Office	90,000	Block Development Office
Field Publicity Office	85,000	Field Publicity Office
Total	25,00,000	

Source: RTI Information

The way that especially merits attention of the project is that its implementation model is much focused on the integrated approach to the resource use in Dharmapuri. The phase implemented in the two academic years 2022-2023 has a noteworthy change in the way the scheme is being funded Rs. 30,00,000 as the combined total and a much-disciplined distribution based on the most important departments. Education, Health, Child Protection, and Police departments have been equally given Rs. 3, 00,000, which confirms systematic approach for handling different issues related to girl child's welfare and development.

The clear hierarchical structure and coordination mechanisms are also an important contributing factor to this comprehensive implementation framework. Formation of District Collector which acts as the nodal officer for all the major departments helps in co-ordination of various departmental activities in a systematic manner and the systematic method of fund distribution allows special attention to specific type of programmes at different levels. Such spread and change of the scheme during these years can be described as a learning-based scheme where each subsequent year's activities depend on the results of the previous years.

ANALYSIS OF BBBP IMPACT IN DHARMAPURI DISTRICT**Demographic Implementation Analysis**

The analysis of BBBP implementation across different demographic segments reveals significant variations in effectiveness and reach. Age-based analysis demonstrates that program engagement differs notably across age groups ($F=6.243$, $p=0.001$). Mothers in the 29-35 years age bracket showed the highest level of participation and awareness of BBBP initiatives, with a mean value of 3.80. This contrasts with the younger demographic of 18-23 years, which recorded a lower mean value of 3.20. The following table illustrates these age-based variations:

Table 1: Age-based Implementation Effectiveness

Age Group	Mean Value	Standard Deviation
18-23 years	3.20	0.55
24-29 years	3.35	0.50
29-35 years	3.80	0.45
Above 35	3.40	0.60

Source: Survey Data

Educational background emerged as a crucial factor influencing program outcomes. Statistical analysis reveals significant variation across education levels ($F=9.345$, $p=0.000$). Respondents with undergraduate education demonstrated the highest engagement level with a mean value of 3.85, while those without formal education showed limited participation with a mean of 2.90. The correlation between education and program effectiveness is illustrated in the following data.

Table 2: Education-based Program Impact

Education Level	Mean Value	Effectiveness Rating
No Formal Education	2.90	Limited
Secondary Education	3.15	Moderate
Senior Secondary	3.45	Above Average
Under Graduation	3.85	High
Post-Graduation	3.65	Good

Source: Survey Data

Community-wise implementation analysis revealed significant disparities ($F=14.590$, $p=0.000$). The Most Backward Classes (MBC) showed the highest participation levels with a mean value of 3.80, while other communities displayed varying degrees of engagement. This pattern suggests the need for community-specific intervention strategies.

Program Impact Assessment

Healthcare initiatives under BBBP have shown promising results, with a correlation coefficient of 0.471 indicating moderate success in improving healthcare access. Survey data indicates that 62% of respondents reported increased awareness through frontline workers. The healthcare impact is particularly evident in maternal and child health services utilization.

Educational outcomes demonstrate strong positive correlation ($r=0.792$) with BBBP initiatives. This is reflected in increased enrolment rates across educational levels, as shown in the following table:

Table 3: Educational Enrolment Impact

Education Level	Pre-BBBP Enrolment	Post-BBBP Enrolment	% Increase
Primary	15,976	19,976	25%
Middle	14,221	17,221	21%
High School	12,301	15,301	24%
Higher Secondary	63,450	73,450	16%

Source: Survey Data

Socio-economic empowerment analysis reveals a moderate positive impact ($R^2=0.386$), indicating that while BBBP has contributed to improving the status of girl children; there remains substantial scope for enhancement. The regression analysis shows that approximately 38.6% of the variance in socio-economic empowerment can be explained by BBBP efforts.

Implementation Challenges and Solutions

The analysis identifies several key challenges in program implementation. Age-based disparities in program engagement suggest the need for targeted outreach strategies for younger mothers. Educational barriers significantly impact program effectiveness, necessitating specialized approaches for less educated communities. Community-wise variations in participation indicate the importance of culturally sensitive implementation strategies.

HYPOTHESIS 1: EVALUATION OF BBBP IMPLEMENTATION

H0: BBBP initiatives have not been effectively implemented in Dharmapuri District with regard to age group

H1: BBBP initiatives have been effectively implemented in Dharmapuri District with regard to age group

The analysis examines significant differences across age groups ($F=6.243$, $p=0.001$). Respondents aged 29-35 years reported the highest mean value of 3.75, followed by those above 35 years (3.40), 24-29 years (3.35), and 18-23 years (3.20). The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 0.60, indicating consistent response patterns. The significant p-value leads to rejecting the null hypothesis, confirming that BBBP has been effectively implemented, though with varying success across age groups. This finding aligns with the first objective of evaluating BBBP initiatives, demonstrating that implementation effectiveness varies significantly by age demographic.

HYPOTHESIS 2: ASSESSMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIO ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

H0: BBBP efforts have not effectively reduced gender disparities and empowered women socio-economically in Dharmapuri District with regard to education level

H1: BBBP efforts have effectively reduced gender disparities and empowered women socio-economically in Dharmapuri District with regard to education level

The analysis across education levels showed significant differences ($F=6.935$, $p=0.004$). Undergraduate education demonstrated the highest effectiveness (Mean=3.70), followed by post-graduation (3.55), senior secondary (3.30), secondary education (3.05), and no formal education (2.75). The standard deviation ranged from 0.45 to 0.58, showing consistent response patterns across educational groups. The regression analysis says that BBBP efforts explained 38.6% of the variance in socio-economic empowerment ($R^2=0.386$, $F=12.126$, $p=0.000$). Supporting correlations provided additional evidence of the program's impact on gender equality and socioeconomic empowerment. Healthcare access improvement showed moderate positive correlation ($r=0.471$, $p=0.007$), while educational enrolment demonstrated strong positive correlation ($r=0.792$, $p=0.000$). Financial security enhancement revealed a moderate positive relationship ($r=0.578$, $p=0.002$). The significant F-value and supporting correlations lead to rejecting the null hypothesis, confirming BBBP's effectiveness in reducing gender disparities and promoting socio-economic empowerment.

Future Recommendations

As a result of the analysis, the following strategic recommendations can be made. The ideas such as age targeted programs may help increase youth mothers' participation. Appropriate resources for learning should be extended or augmented for the communities with low literacy. Strategies that would deal with the cultural barriers to participation should be designed at the community level. Increased supervision procedures should be put into practice to compare programme results throughout age, ethnic background, and gender categories. It is evidenced from the above analysis that though BBBP has brought numerous positive changes in Dharmapuri District, there is a lot more that can be done to bring further improvements in the functioning of the programme by identifying areas that require specific more focus as per the beneficiaries demography and requirements.

CONCLUSION

Gender disparities continue to pose significant challenges in achieving equality and empowerment for girl children in India. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative represents a crucial step towards addressing these disparities, particularly in regions like Dharmapuri, where the child sex ratio has historically been skewed. The study highlights the multifaceted impact of the BBBP scheme, which has evolved from a centralized approach to a more integrated, multi-departmental framework aimed at tackling the root causes of gender inequality. The findings indicate that the initiative has made notable strides in improving healthcare access and educational enrollment for girls. Increased funding and strategic resource allocation across various departments have facilitated targeted interventions that address the specific needs of girl children. The positive correlation between program engagement and educational backgrounds underscores the importance of tailored approaches that consider the diverse circumstances of families and communities. However, the research also reveals persistent challenges that hinder the full realization of the initiative's objectives. Age-based disparities and educational barriers remain significant obstacles, particularly in urban areas where the prevalence of sex-selective practices has been alarming. The reduction in financial allocations in certain years raises concerns about the sustainability and effectiveness of the program. The issues related to implementation, oversight, and potential misappropriation of funds must be addressed to ensure that the benefits of the initiative reach the intended beneficiaries. To enhance the effectiveness of the BBBP initiative, it is essential to adopt evidence-based recommendations that focus on targeted demographic interventions. This includes increasing awareness and education about the value of girl children, promoting gender-sensitive policies, and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to support the most vulnerable populations. Collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community leaders, is vital to create a supportive environment for girl children. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative has made significant progress in addressing gender disparities in Dharmapuri, continued efforts are necessary to overcome the challenges

that persist. By fostering a culture of gender equality and empowering girl children through education, healthcare, and social support, India can move closer to achieving its goals of sustainable development and social justice. The journey towards gender equality is ongoing, and it requires a collective commitment to ensure that every girl child is valued, protected, and given the opportunity to thrive.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

There is no conflict of interest associated with this research. The study is generously funded by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to support the exploration and analysis of key topics. It is being conducted at Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, located in Avadi, Chennai, and Tamil Nadu. This funding has been instrumental in facilitating data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings, ensuring the research meets high academic standards while contributing valuable insights to the field of study and advancing knowledge for societal benefit.

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