

“Evaluation of the Present Gender-Specific Policies and Their Effectiveness in India”

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Abstract

The research introduces the significance of gender-based policies that can be acknowledged in India to address particular harmful social norms. The research has found that only 65.4% Indian women were educated as per the data of 2011. The explored issues in this research have pressed importance on Indian women and other gender minorities being deprived of their social rights. The secondary qualitative method obtained information from various databases such as ProQuest, ScienceDirect, Elsevier, and the respective and 11 articles have been selected. The analysis section has mentioned only 33% of Indian Lok Sabha and assemblies have reserved seats for women. Thus, the research has represented its potential to contribute in future research.

Key words: Gender-specific policies, Policy implementation, Gender equality, Public awareness, Unequal gender composition.

Introduction

India has various gender-specific policies to promote gender equality and address social inequalities. These policies have been framed to focus on citizens' necessities such as health, education, safety, and economic empowerment (Tyagi & Das, 2018). The policies are regarded as important as they can help achieve social justice and foster an equitable society. Allowing these policies to work effortlessly can improve women's rights in India, systemic inequalities, and individual empowerment.

Aim

The research paper aims to evaluate current gender-specific policies in India and understand their effectiveness.

Objectives

To understand the issues of gender specificity in India due to a lack of awareness about the policies
To mention gender-specific policies for India and mention their understanding of their characteristics
To analyze the effectiveness of the present gender-specific policies in India

Research question

What are the gender-specific policies in India, and how effective are they for the Indian population?

Background and rationale

Indian society constantly encounters gender-based violence, economic disparities, and societal aspects that negatively affect women's progress. The Indian population lacks awareness of gender-based policies and holds limited accountability that primarily undermines the power of these policies (Chakraborty et al. 2020). The major challenges behind the implementation of gender-specific policies involve an alarming rate of violence against women, including sexual harassment, dowry-

related violence, and domestic violence. The gender wage gap is a growing issue in India that limits economic opportunities for women and their access to resources.

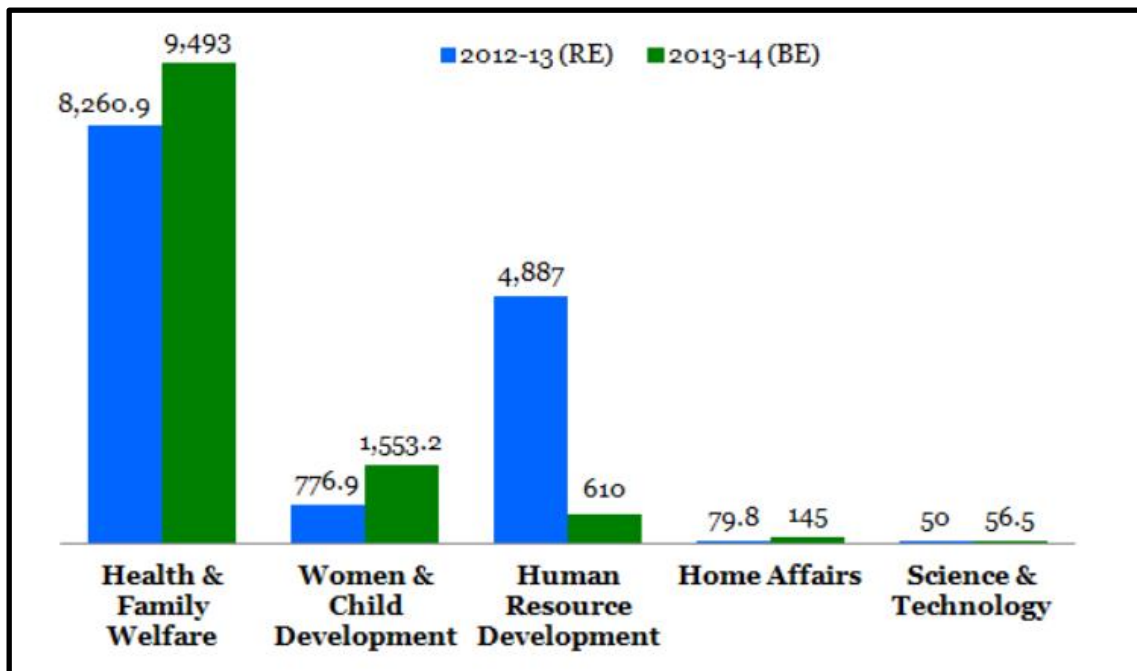


Figure 1: Budget allocation in the top Indian ministries with 100% women-specific programs
(Source: Shankaran, 2013)

As per the reports of Shankaran (2013), the Health and Family Welfare Ministry of India allocated a budget of INR 9.4 Cr along with women & child development of INR 1.5 Cr only. According to Census 2011 data, the female literacy rate in India was only 65.4% as women increased, heading to households in approximately 26.8 million Indian households. India also lacked in initiating budgetary processes regarding women-specific program formulation, planning, and policies, which shows the importance of gender-specific policy development in this region.

Previous literature

Issues causing the formation of gender-based policies in India

Gender-based violence is a concerning issue in India as girls and women face different forms of violence. The historic and systemic gender inequality in India shows that patriarchal norms are deeply rooted limiting women from opportunities and subordinating their roles in society (Tyagi, 2020). Indian society has a cultural fondness for male children that leads to negligence of female children and sex-selective abortions. Besides, gender-based violence (GBV) affects 50% of Indian women through honour killing, domestic violence, and the respective. A low female literacy rate can be held responsible for such issues, leading to their economic dependence, which makes them more vulnerable (Jha & Nagar, 2015).

Explore the gender-specific policies of India.

“Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” (BBBP) is a potential gender-specific policy of India that can be considered as a flagship scheme to improve the sex ratio and promote education for female children (Chakraborty et al. 2020). This is a holistic development program empowering adolescent Indian girls to make them economically independent. Besides, there is the “Mahila Shakti Kendra” (MSK) to help

women in skill development so that they can acquire employment opportunities. However, a lack of funding for these schemes along with awareness among rural women hinders their effectiveness (Chakraborty et al. 2020). The National Health Mission is an initiative to improve the conditions for women during childbirth and maternal stages, addressing the issues of malnutrition and maternal mortality.

Assessment of the efficacy of gender-specific Indian policies

The efficiency of GBV varies as the social challenges remain in Indian society along with insufficient awareness. For instance, programs such as "Poshan Abhiyan" and "Janani Suraksha Yojana" have significantly improved maternal and infant health (Kethineni et al. 2016). However, challenges of women's participation in workplaces and resource allocation accordingly still remain a challenge. Even all-women police stations in India have faced criticism and unintended consequences, showing the critical condition of Indian policy implementation.

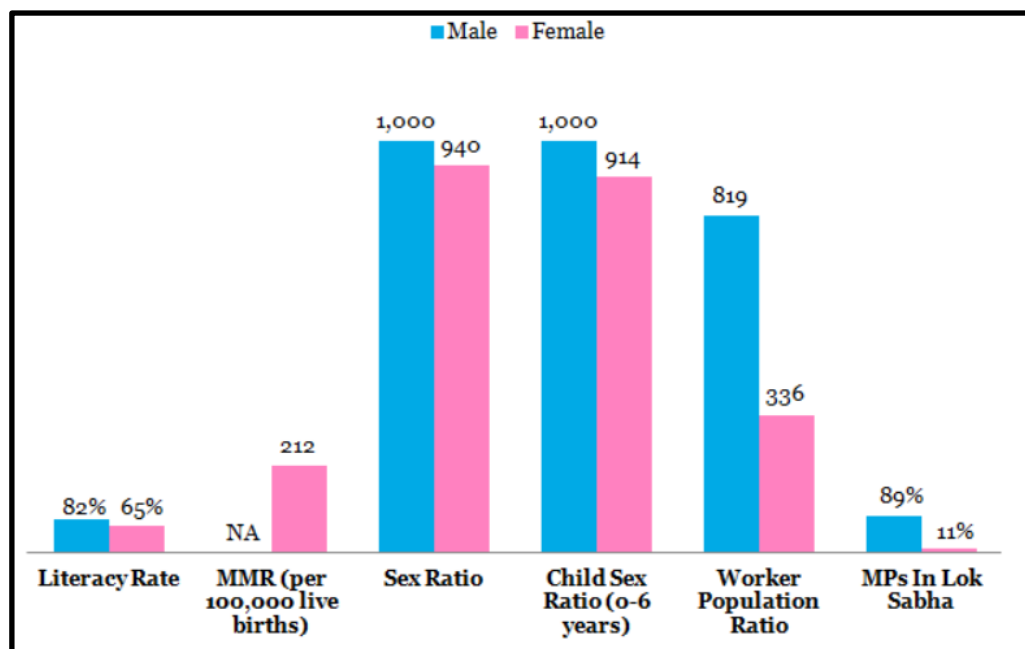


Figure 2: Inequalities in gender budgeting in India (Source: Shankaran, 2013)

A biased gender budget in different social areas has been demonstrated in Figure 2. Gender-specific programs were allocated INR 97.1 Cr in 2012-2013, which accounted for only 5.8% of the planned expenditure (Shankaran, 2013). The "Nirbhaya" fund was created with an allocation of INR 1,000 Cr in 2013-2014, which was effective in ensuring women's safety and empowerment.

Method

The research has followed a secondary qualitative method, which has allowed the study to conduct a systematic review. Several authentic databases such as ProQuest, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, PubMed, and Elsevier have been accessed as they provide a wide range of publications on social issues (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019).

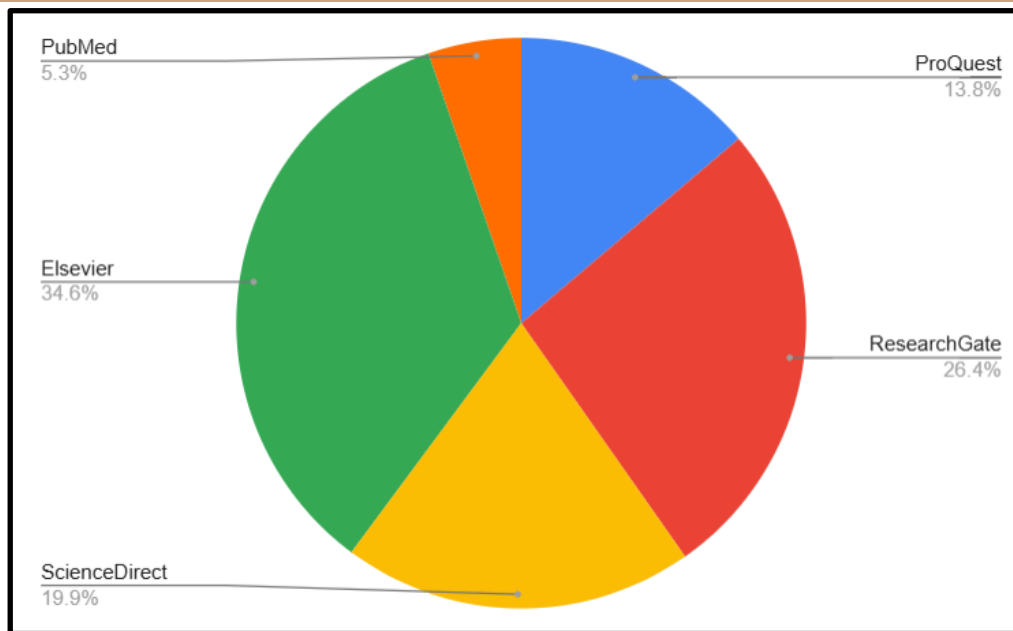


Figure 3: Selected sources from databases

Figure 3 explains that the majority of the sources have been selected from Elsevier with 34.6% (85), followed by 26.4% from ResearchGate and other relevant sources.

Table 1: Boolean search results

Keywords	AND/OR	Keywords	AND/OR	Keywords	Search results
Gender inequality	AND	Social injustice	OR	Gender-specific policies	ProQuest= 17 ResearchGate=65
Women's safety	AND	Gender-based violence	OR	Gender-specific Program	Elsevier=85 PubMed=13
Indian policy implementation	OR	Women's skill development	AND	Female education	ScienceDirect=49 ProQuest=17

Boolean search results have shown that specific keywords have been used to find out the most relevant sources for this research. Keywords such as “gender inequality,” “Indian policy implementation”, and “female education” have assisted in narrowing down the obtained amount of information.

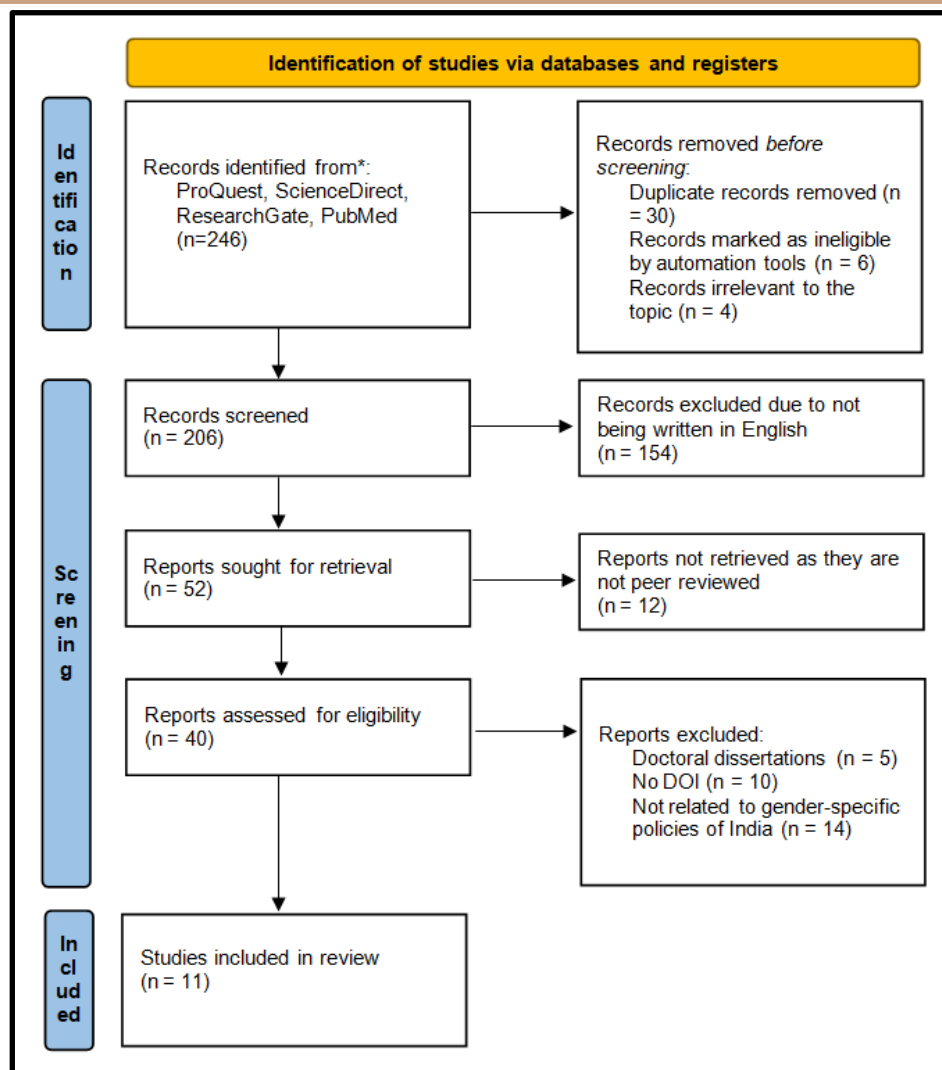


Figure 4: PRISMA diagram (Source: Chatfield, 2020)

As per the PRISMA diagram, 11 peer-reviewed journals and articles have been acknowledged to be included in the data analysis section. They have been chosen based on their relevance to contain information on gender-specific policies of India, having proper author information, English language, and the respective. A thematic analysis has been conducted after their selection to answer the research question. It has effectively examined the lack of public awareness regarding GBV and their power while enacted properly (Chatfield, 2020).

Results

Table 2: Axial coding

Authors	Codes	Themes
Cook et al. (2019) Kethineni et al.	Domestic violence, systematic gender inequality, honor killing, economic dependence	“Gender-specific violence in India is the main social issue to be addressed by gender-based policies”

(2016) Nakray (2018) Hadi (2019)		
Allwood (2013) Tannenbaum et al. (2016) Nowiński et al. (2019) Wong et al. (2013)	Promote awareness, women's empowerment, social issues, holistic development of women	“Gender-specific policies need to clarify their intentions and increase public awareness”
Chowdhury & Patnaik (2010) Shastri (2014) Chopra & Ugalde (2018)	Social challenges, policy implementation, government initiatives	“Gender-specific policy is important and effective to promote gender equality in India”

Analysis

Gender-specific violence in India is the main social issue to be addressed by gender-based policies.

Gender-specific violence is an undeniable social issue in India that compels many gender-based policies to be acknowledged in this country. As stated by Kethineni et al. (2016), a broader spectrum of inequality can be addressed by implementing gender-based policies and uprooting gender discrimination. These policies aim to fill the gap that limits the female population's access to education, health, employment, and political participation for marginalized genders and women. For instance, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** is a social scheme that promotes the education of girls (Nakray, 2018). Panchayati Raj Institutions is another effective policy to reserve women's power in legal governance. Ingrained patriarchal norms can also be addressed that cover harmful practices against specific genders and traditional gender roles in India. In this context, it can also be mentioned that women suffer from the issues of child marriage, dowry, and sex-selective abortions (Hadi, 2019). For example, the Indian government has initiated the “**Preconception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT)**” to eliminate gender diagnosis before childbirth. Economic disparities are the fundamental areas that the government schemes and policies target. Therefore, such policy effectiveness is expected to reduce violence against women and other vulnerable populations of India.

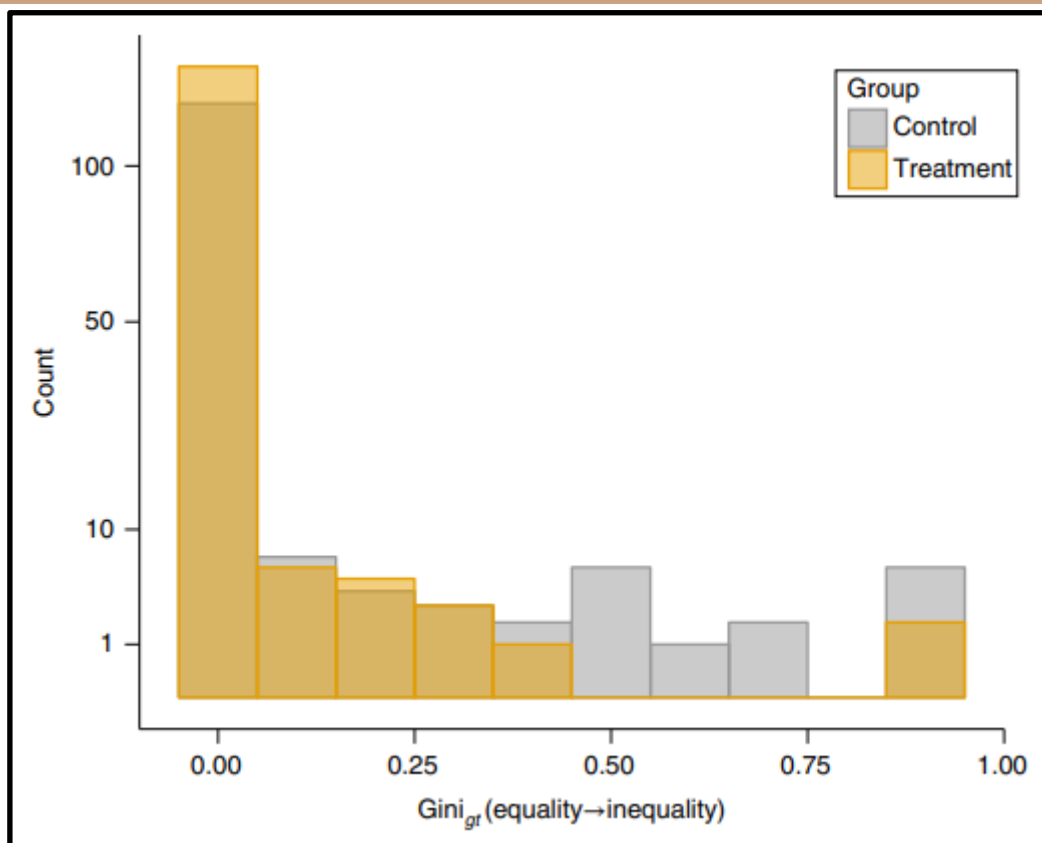


Figure 5: Distribution of PES payment (Source: Cook et al. 2019)

The concept of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) can be mentioned, which refers to the compensation for an individual for offering ecosystem services. A study by Cook et al. (2019) projects that the distribution of PES is unequal as the values of control and treatment are high. Therefore, an unequal gender composition is evident in India that must be immediately addressed. Strict adherence to the policies can also ensure that the rate of GBV is reduced along with taking proper steps against such crimes.

Gender-specific policies need to clarify their intentions and increase public awareness.

Clarity in gender-specific policies is important to raise public awareness of their vitality to reform Indian society. Indian gender-specific laws need to mandate the representation of more women in political bodies such as state legislatures and Parliament (Allwood, 2013). Furthermore, women in government leadership positions can further strengthen public awareness of women's rights as well as potential. For instance, the “**Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**” is a Women's Reservation Bill that aims to reserve 33% of seats in the state assemblies and Lok Sabha for women (Wong et al. 2013). It contributes to the social and cultural empowerment of Indian society by enhancing a sense of self-worth, challenging social norms, and promoting decision-making autonomy for women. In contrast, Tannenbaum et al. (2016) have pointed out that this reservation bills might have a few drawbacks that must be considered before their implementation and their assessment must be done to understand the consequences. Thus, it lacks in creating an immediate impact and underrepresentation of women's power.

Gender-specific policies are not only limited to women in India but also recognize vulnerable groups and gender minorities. For example, Indian law has taken a significant step through the “**Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**” to reduce violence against gender minorities (Nowiński et al. 2019). They are marginalized gender and require government support to acquire their rights in education, health, and basic living necessities. However, Wong et al. (2013) have identified that this

Act has several shortcomings, including defining a transgender and failure of full cooperation from the Supreme Court. This Act has also been criticized for criminalizing begging and imposing lighter penalties for assault and discrimination that restrict the desired outcome of the administration of this Act.

Gender-specific policy is important and effective in promoting gender equality in India.

The impact of gender-specific laws in India is multifaceted and complex despite their effectiveness in raising awareness of gender equality. As per the view of Chowdhury & Patnaik (2010), the systemic and historic gender inequality in India can be addressed by approaching proper policies. It can free Indian women from social disadvantages and practices that limit their potential. Specific needs of the vulnerable groups of the Indian population can be targeted with these policies that impose unique challenges for them. Contrarily, Chopra & Ugalde (2018) have contradicted this by stating that gender-specific policies in India must address the particular needs of women such as their access to reproductive healthcare, which is still a taboo in this country. Gender-neutral policies can also be introduced or combined with gender-specific policies to encourage their value.

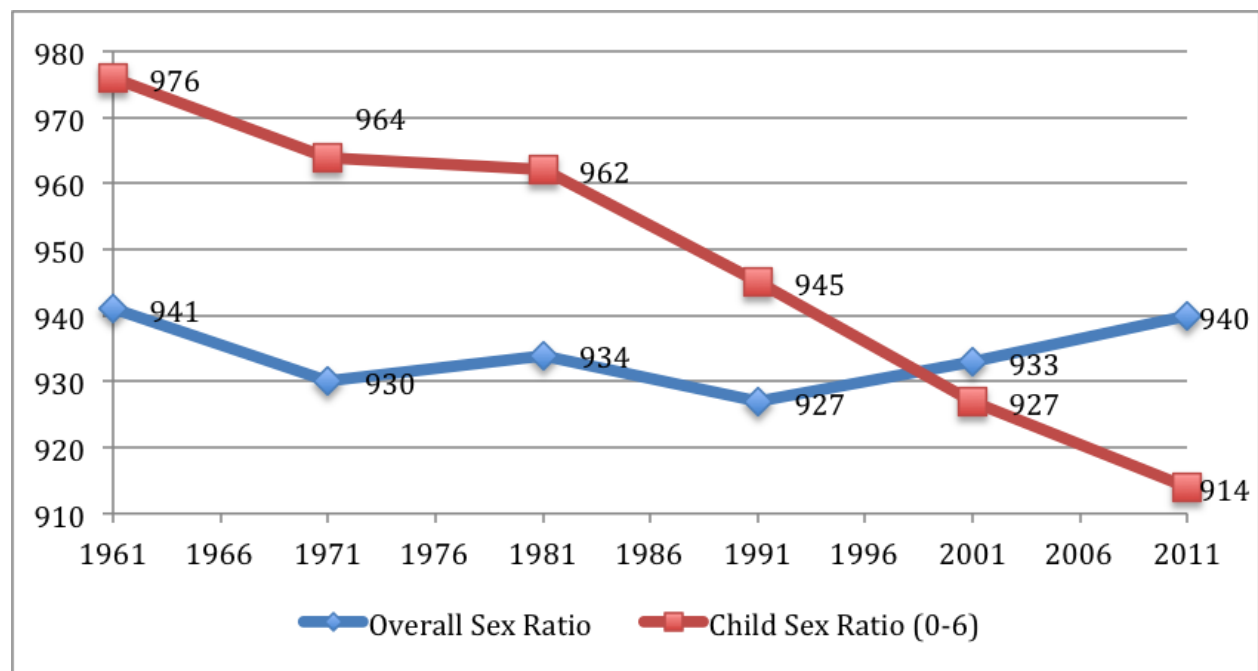


Figure 6: Child and overall sex ratio in India (Source: Shastri, 2014)

Figure 6 determines the overall sex ratio and child sex ratio of India as per the findings of the study conducted by Shastri (2014). The representation of data reveals that the child sex ratio determination in India has dropped over time till 2011. However, the findings of the research have pointed out that male children in India tend to have more resources and childcare than female children in India. The findings have also suggested that the expense for male children is likely to be 20% more than for female children in the households of India. Thus, gender-specific policies are required to ensure an inclusive environment where women can have equal access to all social systems (Chowdhury & Patnaik, 2010). It must empower them and support their growth potential by necessitating gender-specific actions. Consequently, the aim of gender-based laws and policies can be fulfilled by acknowledging a transformative change in Indian society.

Discussion

Indian society has been a victim of patriarchal culture and beliefs for generations that cause unequal

power dynamics. According to Nakray (2018), India has traditional gender roles and stereotypes that confine women to domestic responsibilities and care giving. Their potential is undervalued, and they are deprived of their rights, which cause a gender gap and social injustice. Hence, the Indian government has initiated various policies and schemes to address this injustice, such as in education, health, public life, and employment (Chakraborty, 2014). Besides, the findings have suggested that India has existing stringent laws that are implemented inconsistently. This is the cause of legal loopholes that potentially delay the judicial process contributing to cultural impunity. However, as argued by Fletcher et al. (2017), socioeconomic factors such as female literacy and forced labour participation can also be held responsible for making the problem of gender inequality more vulnerable. As a result, the research has tried to focus on the power of gender-specific policy addressing these critical issues.

Recommendations

Indian laws must be efficient in terms of their implementation, ensuring their positive outcome. It can be recommended to strengthen the mechanisms of legal institutions and utilize data-driven approaches (Koonan, 2019). It can help in promoting gender-responsive budgeting that India is currently lacking, as evidence of current research has also demonstrated. Moreover, women representatives in Indian legislative bodies can be ensured so that the female population of India can be positively motivated. They can also conduct public awareness programs to educate Indian citizens about the basic human rights that Indian women are being deprived of (Fletcher et al. 2017).

Conclusion

The critical discussion of this research paper has emphasized that gender-specific policies are significant to be promoted in India. They are effective in terms of addressing social injustice and gender inequalities that Indian society has been suffering from for many years. The secondary qualitative study method has further helped in investigating previous research papers supporting Indian gender-specific laws to mitigate the critical situation. Besides, the themes have been formulated to focus on serious issues of gender-specific violence that can be eliminated by an appropriate implementation of gender-specific policies. Henceforth, the purpose of the research to discuss the issue and find proper solutions has been achieved.

Limitations and future scope

The chosen method of performing the study is limited in its approach to collecting existing knowledge on gender inequality in India. Various gender-specific policies and their expected outcomes have been mentioned, yet it lacks in identifying the areas of application. A lack of quantified data has worked as a limitation in the short span of the research as well. The research also lacks in incorporating theoretical concepts that could have improved the quality of the research outcome.

Yet the current research has a future scope of offering authentic knowledge on enforced gender-specific policies in India. The benefits and drawbacks of these policies have been demonstrated, which future studies can apply to different scenarios for a better understanding of their efficacy. In this way, the research background will be enriched with this existing knowledge as well as new knowledgeable contributions.

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