

**DOES GENDER EMPOWERMENT SCHEMES
REDUCE CRIME AGAINST WOMEN?
EVIDENCE FROM INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the causal impact of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) policy on two critical gender outcomes in India: the Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and Crime Against Women (CAW). Although BBBP is a flagship government initiative to address entrenched gender imbalances, its empirical evaluations are few and far between. A quasi-experimental Difference-in-Differences (DiD) approach is utilised to identify the causal impacts of the Multi-Sectoral Intervention component of BBBP, introduced in certain districts between 2015 and 2019 by the district-level data from administrative and survey-based sources. Based on pre- and post-intervention period data, trends in CSR and CAW in treatment and control districts are compared. Different control variables like economic, social, institutional, and policy-related, are controlled to reduce confounding effects.

The results show statistically significant rises in CSR in BBBP districts and hence a decline in sex-selective behaviour and greater acceptance towards the girl child. There is also a modest and significant decline in CAW, which may be due to increased institutional responsiveness, increased female autonomy, and better policy implementation. These results underscore the effectiveness of coordinated, multi-sectoral gender interventions in promoting structural change in gender outcomes. The paper adds to the evidence on gender policy in India and illustrates the value of using causal inference techniques to evaluate public policy. It also underscores the value of district-level tailoring and strong data systems in optimizing the impact of gender equity programs.

Keywords: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), child sex ratio (CSR), crime against women (CAW), difference-in-differences (DiD), gender empowerment, public policy evaluation, India.