

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: POLICIES, IMPLICATIONS, AND IMPACT

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment in India has emerged as an important issue in recent years, significantly impacting social, economic, and political development. This paper examines the structure, implications, and impact of initiatives to improve women's empowerment in India. It refers to various policies, including legal frameworks and government policies, designed to address gender disparities and promote women's rights. The central government and the concerned states have initiated several programs as per the need of time to ensure women's empowerment in India. The implications of these policies are discussed here, focusing on their economic, social, and political consequences. In addition, the paper considers the tangible impact of women's empowerment programs, such as improvements in literacy rates, labor force participation, health outcomes, and political representation. Despite notable progress, challenges such as gender-based violence remain, underscoring the need for continued concerted efforts to achieve gender equality. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for sustained commitment and collaboration across sectors to achieve meaningful and sustainable empowerment for women in India.

Keywords: Equality, Gender, India, Women empowerment, Government policy, Employment.

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INTRODUCTION

Women are exploited and discriminated against everywhere in the world. Empowerment serves as a tool to help women attain parity with men or, at the very least, narrow the gender gap. Women are strategically important to the growth of the economy in general and society in particular. A woman is the head of the household, the primary planner, the primary trainer, and the provider of labor, and she contributes significantly to the growth of industry, the service sector, agriculture, socio-culture, and other areas that go into making a civilized society. Her hidden potential must be realized, which calls for raising her social standing and giving her more financial stability. Either directly or indirectly, women support economic development. Despite the fact that women are exceptionally gifted with the genetic capacity for reproduction, women's socio-economic standing is extremely low, and women are more likely than males to experience poverty. Women's empowerment has gained attention in the last two to three decades and is now a global development priority. At present, the Indian government focuses on women's empowerment. Since then, many researchers have attempted to compile a body of literature addressing women's empowerment nationally and worldwide.

Indian governments have seen significant strides in women's empowerment over the years, with the government implementing various initiatives to uplift and support women nationwide. They prioritized women's empowerment across multiple fronts, implementing a range of initiatives and policies. Legal reforms, including amendments to strengthen laws against sexual assault, form a crucial aspect of this endeavor. Education initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) aim to boost female literacy rates and ensure access to education for girls. Healthcare schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) provide financial support to pregnant and lactating mothers, enhancing maternal and child health. Economic empowerment programs like the National Rural Livelihood Mission and Stand Up India focus on providing financial assistance and entrepreneurial opportunities to women. Political participation is encouraged through reservations in local and legislative bodies. Initiatives for safety and security, skill development, and social welfare further complement these efforts, collectively striving to address gender

disparities and promote women's empowerment across India. Overall, the focus areas for women's empowerment were education, healthcare, economic empowerment, safety and security, skill development, social welfare, political participation, etc.

Despite the longstanding commitment of governments to women's empowerment, exhaustive planning of extant policies and schemes, along with their implications and impacts, remains absent in online resources. Consequently, this lacuna prompted the authors to undertake a comprehensive survey to collate pertinent and valuable data into a unified resource. Such an endeavor facilitates policymakers in crafting informed decisions regarding the formulation of new policies and necessary amendments, as deemed necessary. An enhanced understanding of these policies pertaining to women will constitute an additional advantage derived from this study.

Objective

The primary objective of this study was to explore and compile the policies concerning women's empowerment in India, their implications, and their impacts. Second, the author endeavored to compile significant research endeavors that have assessed the impact of policies aimed at empowering women in India. This involved evaluating their implications on diverse societal dimensions and scrutinizing their tangible effects on women's lives, socioeconomic status, and overall empowerment within the Indian context.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the objective of the study, the author selected a comprehensive review design. The study is mainly based on secondary data sources: government reports, surveys, annual periodic surveys, census data surveys, research journals, review articles, newspaper articles, blogs, and website materials. The study draws upon central and state government policies, previous reviews, and research studies on women's empowerment. The literature review examines previous reviews of women's empowerment, particularly emphasizing studies on gender equality, education, economy, rights, involvement in policies, and identifying issues and challenges. Qualitative information from published reports, journal papers, newspaper articles, and other

sources complemented the quantitative analysis. The analysis focuses on influential articles up to May 2024. The referencing and citation follow the American Psychological Association seventh edition style.

Initially, keyword searches centered around “women empowerment policies in India” facilitated gathering relevant data, including the impact of these policies from credible sources. Search engines such as Google, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Scopus were utilized. Based on the retrieved information, policies were categorized into central and state government initiatives and systematically compiled.

Central government policies for women empowerment

The Indian government has implemented a range of policies with the aim of empowering women across social, educational, political, and economic domains. Notably, the transition from welfare-focused measures to developmental strategies became pronounced during the 55-year plan (1974–1978), signaling a shift in priorities toward recognizing women's empowerment as essential for overall societal advancement. Over time, the emphasis on women's empowerment has grown, with ten significant policies identified out of 24. Some schemes have been consolidated into larger initiatives to improve efficiency, such as integrating Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) into the BBBP campaign in 2015. These efforts underscore the government's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and equitable society by prioritizing the empowerment of women through comprehensive policy measures.

Working women hostel

The Working Women Hostel Program was started by the central government in 1972–1973, with the goal of providing shelter for working or homeless women. The principal aim was to furnish secure and easily accessible lodging for employed women, along with child care services for their offspring, in urban, semiurban, or even rural regions where female employment prospects are present.

According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2022a), 74,666 working women in 450 working women hostels are also getting the benefit of daycare along with their 11,018 children.

National nutrition policy

The government of India introduced the National Nutrition Policy in 1993. The scheme's aims were adolescent girls' nutrition to help them become safe mothers and pregnant women's diet to reduce the risk of low birth weight (Department of Women and Child Development, 1993).

Girls between the ages of 11 and 14 can get nutritional and non-nutritional help through the government program known as the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG). The initiative was started in 2010 to assist girls in ending the cycle of gender-based and nutritional deprivation. Supplemental nourishment is offered by the program 300 days a year. This comprises vitamins, 18–20 g of protein, and 600 calories. The revised SAG, which is now included in Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, has replaced the earlier scheme, which was discontinued on March 31, 2022. The revised scheme's also targeted beneficiaries are adolescent girls in the 14–18 age group. The primary goal of the program is to promote menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022b).

BBBP program

Ministry of Women and Child Development launched, on January 22, 2015, the BBBP program. The goal is to address the falling child sex ratio and associated concerns of women's and girls' empowerment throughout the life cycle. Preventing gender-biased sex-selective elimination, ensuring the female child's survival and protection, and ensuring her education and participation are the goals of the program (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022c).

The national sex ratio of birth (SRB) index, influenced by the BBBP program, showed significant improvement. Over 5 years, there was a notable increase of 16 points, reaching 934 in 2019–2020 from 918 in 2014–2015. In addition, girls' enrollment in secondary schools rose by 3.87 points in 4 years, from 77.45 in 2014–2015 to 81.32 in 2018–2019. Moreover, the proportion of schools with separate and functioning restrooms for females increased to 95.1% in 2018–2019 from 92.1% in 2014–2015, reflecting positive changes in facilities provided for girls (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022d).

One-stop center (OSC)

In 2015, the central government launched the OSC Scheme under the Nirbhaay Fund. This initiative aims to offer a range of services, including police assistance, medical support, legal aid and counseling, psycho-social counseling, and temporary shelter to women in need. Presently, 704 OSCs are established across India. Although the ministry allocated 311.14 crore rupees for women's safety, only 43 crore rupees (13%) of the amount has been utilized as of 2021 (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2021).

SSY

One savings program that assists parents in saving for their girl child's education is the SSY. As part of the BBBP initiative, the Indian government introduced the program in 2015. The primary objective of SSY is to encourage parents to build a corpus for the education, marriage, and overall empowerment of their daughters. The scheme aims to foster financial stability and security for the girl child by providing a safe and lucrative investment avenue. The girl kid must be under 10 years old and a resident Indian at the time the account is opened. For every girl child, only one account may be opened. To open an account, all you need is Rs. 250. Only a 15-year deposit is needed. The SSY account may be kept open without any additional deposits until the conclusion of the maturity period, which is 21 years. More than one crore accounts had been opened under the scheme across India till the end of 2021 (Ministry of Finance, 2021).

Swadhar Greh scheme

Ministry of Women and Child Development launched on April 1, 2016, shelter homes under the Swadhar Greh Scheme. The scheme provides primary needs assistance to women and girls who are facing difficult circumstances, such as being forced into prostitution and facing moral danger or experiencing mental stress, family strife, criminality, violence, or social exclusion. The scheme strives to economically and emotionally rehabilitate such women in tough circumstances by providing food, clothing, shelter, counseling, training, clinical assistance, and legal aid. In Vrindavan, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, the Ministry built the “Krishna Kutir,” a home for widows that can house up to 1,000 widows. During the 2021–2022 period, there were 357 Swadhar Greh facilities nationwide, with a total capacity of 10,710. The occupancy rate across India stood at 76.2% as of March 25, 2022, according to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022e).

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)

The PMUY is an Indian government initiative launched on May 1, 2016, by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. It aims to provide clean cooking fuel in the form of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to women from economically disadvantaged households. The program targets women above the age of 18 who belong to below-the-poverty-line (BPL) families.

The primary goal of PMUY is to improve the health and well-being of women by replacing traditional cooking fuels like firewood, coal, and dung cakes with LPG, which is cleaner and more efficient. By providing subsidized LPG connections, PMUY seeks to alleviate the burden of household air pollution, reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases, and empower women by enhancing their safety and convenience in cooking.

Since its inception, PMUY has made significant strides in expanding access to clean cooking fuel across India. The scheme has witnessed multiple phases of implementation, with subsequent versions such as Ujjwala 2.0 introduced to further enhance its reach and impact. Through targeted outreach efforts and partnerships with stakeholders at various levels, PMUY continues to play a crucial role in promoting sustainable energy access and improving the quality of life for millions of households in India.

As of May 20, 2024, Ujjwala 2.0 has facilitated the distribution of 10,32,57,053 LPG connections. The expansion of LPG usage through such programs is expected to mitigate air pollution, deforestation, and related health concerns (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, 2024).

PMMVY

The Government of India introduced the PMMVY as a maternity benefit program. It is designed to offer financial assistance to pregnant women and lactating mothers for their first living child. Launched on January 1, 2017, the scheme is administered by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Eligible beneficiaries under PMMVY receive a cash incentive of Rs. 5,000 distributed in three installments, subject to fulfilling specific maternal and child health conditions. The overarching objectives of the scheme include addressing critical issues related to maternal and child health, reducing maternal and infant mortality rates, and empowering women by providing financial support during the crucial phases of pregnancy and lactation (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2019). An increase in the number of beneficiaries has been noted within the time duration of 3 years, almost for all the states, with few exceptions (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2023a).

State government's efforts and policies for women's empowerment

India has 28 states and eight union territories. The researcher has included the schemes in her research work that are run for women's empowerment in the states and Union Territories. The researcher selected the states based on the data available on the internet and states with limited data were omitted. Further, the author has tried to cover all the country's directions. Out of 28 states, six 21.42% of states' policies were covered in the study.

Madhya Pradesh state

Madhya Pradesh government stated or adopted several central government schemes for women empowerment like Beti Bacho Abhiyan, Ladli Laxmi Yojna, Lado Campaign, Shaurya Dal, Swagatam Lakshmi Yojana, Usha Kiran Yojana, Gaon Ki Beti Yojana, and Balika Shiksha Protsahan Yojana. These schemes aim to improve literacy, provide a safe society, and provide quick justice (Pandey & Pandey, 2018).

According to findings from the National Family Health Survey 2020–2021, 23% of women fell below the standard body mass index, and 54.7% of women aged 15–49 suffered from anemia. Responding to these concerning statistics, the state government introduced the Mukhya Mantri Ladli Behna Yojana on January 28, 2023. This initiative aims to notably improve women's nutrition, health, and financial autonomy (Department of Women and Child Development, 2024).

Kerala state

Kerala boasts the highest literacy rate in India at 94% and a gender ratio of 1,084 women for every 1,000 men, as per the National Family Health Survey 2020–2021 (Piyush, 2023). Consequently, the Kerala government has placed a strong emphasis on enhancing women's health, nutrition, and overall well-being. To address maternity concerns, the government has implemented the Pradhan Mantri Mathru Vandana Yojna alongside launching the pioneering First 1000 days scheme. In addition, initiatives like Sahaya Hastham, Abhayakiranam, and Mangalya have been introduced to support widowed women. Moreover, the Aswasanidhi project offers financial aid to survivors of

sexual crimes and severe gender-based violence. The government has allocated a corpus fund of Rs. 300 lakh in the 2018–2019 state budget to provide interim relief to these victims. In the fiscal year 2021–2022, a record-breaking Rs. 3.78 crore was distributed among 472 victims, marking the largest financial assistance disbursement (Department of Women & Child Development, n.d.).

Maharashtra state

Maharashtra took early strides in prioritizing women's welfare, launching its initial policy in 1994, followed by updates in 1999 and March 2014. On March 8, 2021, the state introduced the "Maha Samruddhi Mahila Sashaktikaran scheme," aimed at empowering rural women. One of its key objectives is to encourage the inclusion of wives' names alongside their husbands' on the 7/12 extract (Team, 2021). In lieu of Sukanya Yojana, the state initiated the Mazi Kanya Bhagyashree scheme in the fiscal year 2016–2017. This scheme focuses on safeguarding girls' children, providing education, preventing child marriage, and facilitating skill development for financial independence (Vishaka, 2023). The government allocated 25 crore rupees for this initiative in the financial year 2017–2018. Similarly, the Savitribai Phule Kanya Kalyan scheme, aimed at protecting and supporting girl children, incurred an expenditure of 2.42 crore rupees in the 2016–2017 period (Shah *et al.*, 2020). Launched in 2013, the Manodhairya Scheme provides financial aid and rehabilitation to victims of rape and acid attacks. Under the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956, the scheme extends coverage to victims under eighteen who have been rescued. It offers financial assistance of up to 10 lakh rupees, along with shelter, counseling, medical and legal aid, education, and vocational training for victims and their dependents (Express News Service, 2023).

Bihar state

Over the past two decades, the Bihar government has introduced numerous pioneering programs and policies aimed at empowering young girls and women. The majority of these initiatives focus on social protection, health, education, addressing gender discrimination, and enhancing household infrastructure. In the realm of social protection, the state operates five schemes. Widows above 18 years old, with a family income of <Rs. 60,000 annually, or belonging to BPL households are eligible for the Laxmi Bai Social Security Pension. In the fiscal year 2017–2018 alone, this scheme provided financial assistance totaling 260.47 crores to widowed women. In the healthcare sector, the state implements seven plans. Notably, two programs, Yukti Yojana and Nayee Pidhi Swasthya Guarantee Karyakram, prioritize health outcomes. The Nayee Pidhi Swasthya Guarantee Karyakram proposed an expenditure of 125 crore on health services for the years 2012–2014. Education initiatives include four schemes. The Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana aims to boost female student enrollment and attendance by providing bicycles through monetary transfers. To fulfill this objective, the state government allocated 26 crores during the 2018–2019 fiscal year (Pandey, n.d.).

Uttar Pradesh state

In Uttar Pradesh, the double-engine government is committed to empowering and enhancing the well-being of women across all life stages, starting from birth. Initiatives such as Chief Minister Kanya Sumangal Yojana, free maternal vaccinations, tuition-free education up to graduation, free gas connections, ensuring dignity, facilitating access to housing and sanitation facilities, and promoting women's representation in government jobs have brought significant positive changes to women's lives. There are ongoing discussions regarding granting ownership rights to women under the PM Housing Scheme and PM Ownership Scheme. Through the Mission Shakti campaign, comprehensive information on all welfare schemes is being disseminated, enabling women to progress toward self-reliance. Efforts have been made to bolster the security apparatus to combat violence against women and girls, ensuring their safe participation in society. Uttar Pradesh is witnessing progressive strides this month, which are pivotal for its overall development. In the budget for the fiscal year

2024–2025, the Uttar Pradesh government has allocated Rs. 4,073 crore for pensions for destitute women. Furthermore, Rs. 700 crore has been earmarked for the Chief Minister Kanya Sumangal Yojana and Rs. 322 crore for the PM Matru Vandana Yojana (Dainik, 2024).

According to a report by Dainik (2024), the percentage of women's participation in the labor force in Uttar Pradesh increased from 14.02% in 2017–2018 to 32.10% in the year 2022–2023. The maternal mortality rate, which stood at 285/lakh in 2014, has declined to 167 by 2022, reflecting improvements in women's health. In order to honor women and ensure their safety, the Janani Suraksha Yojana facilitated 20,07,963 deliveries by January 2024 during the financial year 2023–2024. In addition, in the same fiscal year until January, free medication was provided to 16,38,428 pregnant women, nutritious food was distributed to 10,13,398 undernourished women, and 20,62,382 women benefited from free health check-up facilities. Furthermore, in the financial year 2023–2024, the Uttar Pradesh government distributed 5.6 million free gas cylinders under Prime Minister Ujjwala Yojana, promoting better health outcomes for women and engaging them in other constructive endeavors.

Punjab state

Established in 1955, the Department of Social Security and Development of Women and Children in Punjab was dedicated to combating immoral trafficking and enhancing the welfare of various marginalized groups, including widows, destitute women, older adults, the visually impaired, mentally challenged individuals, and orphaned or dependent children. To ensure security and development, the Punjab government initiated 11 schemes such as the OSC, Women Helpline 181, Swadhar Greh scheme, The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Punjab State Social Welfare Board, among others. Additionally, District Hubs for Empowerment of Women would be established in line with the State Hub for Empowerment of Women. Under the supervision of the State Resource Centre for Women, 12 major programs, including central initiatives like the PMMVY and flagship programs like the Mata Tripta Yojana and Udaan (sanitary napkin distribution) program, were implemented. The innovative Mata Tripta Yojana specifically targets households headed by single women, aiming to empower them. Launched in 2021, this program ensures that eligible recipients of the 78 government programs, now managed by various ministries, receive their entitled benefits.

Moving forward, twenty-seven additional activities and programs are integrated into this plan. Notably, the Udaan sub-scheme, launched in May 2022 under the Mata Tripta Yojana, provides free sanitary napkins to women and girls across Punjab. Each of the 27,314 Anganwari Centers statewide distributes nine free sanitary pads to 50 women and/or girls, benefiting a total of 13,65,700 individuals monthly. Another noteworthy initiative is the Mai Bhago Vidya program, addressing mobility challenges by providing young girls with bicycles. Under this program, all female students in grades nine through twelve receive bicycles free of charge. In the fiscal year 2023–2024, the gender budget size amounted to 8618.50 crore. Furthermore, under the PMMVY, women aged 19 or older who give birth to their first live child are entitled to a Maternity Benefit of Rs. 5,000, paid in two installments. Between January 1, 2017, and October 31, 2022, a total of 5,35,582 recipients received payments totaling Rs. 188.25 crore through direct benefit transfer (Department of Social Security and Women and Child Development, 2023).

Additional endeavors, initiatives, and measures aimed at promoting women's empowerment over time

The connection between women's empowerment and their employment in India is evident. From 2017–2018 to 2021–2022, there has been a notable increase of 9.5% points in the female labor force participation rate. In the year 2021–2022, women's participation in the labor force stood at 57.5% in rural areas and 49.5% in urban areas (Employment Statistics in Focus, April 2023). To further enhance women's engagement in the workforce, ensuring their financial stability

and access to quality employment, the government has initiated various impactful measures. Here are some noteworthy policies, programs, and schemes implemented for this purpose:

Equal opportunity and congenial work environment

To ensure equal opportunities and a supportive work environment for women employees, labor laws have incorporated several protective provisions. These include mandates such as providing a mandatory crèche facility in establishments with 50 or more employees, extending paid maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, granting 12 weeks of maternity leave for mothers adopting children under 3 months old or commissioning mothers, permitting women to work night shifts with appropriate safety measures, and more. In addition, women are allowed to hold technical, managerial, and supervisory positions in underground mines between 6 am and 7 pm, where continuous presence may not be necessary, and in above-ground mines, including opencast workings, from 7 pm to 6 am (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2023).

Wage parity

The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976, now integrated into the Code on Wages of 2019, prohibits employers from discriminating based on gender in establishments or their units concerning wages for employees performing the same or similar work. Aimed at enhancing women's employability, the government is providing training opportunities through a network of regional, national, and women's industrial training institutes (Ministry of Labour & Employment, n.d.)

Protected employment in government jobs

To promote a balanced lifestyle for women, the Central Government has introduced various measures such as childcare leave (730 days), special maternity leave (60 days), special allowances for women with disabilities (Rs. 3,000/month), and special leave for inquiries into sexual harassment (90 days) (Employment Statistics in Focus, 2023).

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA)

The MGNREGA, 2005, stands as a keystone of social welfare in India, predominantly empowering rural families with employment and livelihood security. Aimed at women, MGNREGA acts as a catalyst to empower on several fronts. It guarantees gender equality by mandating equal wages for men and women who accomplish the same tasks, thereby addressing wage disparities predominant in rural areas. Women are not only encouraged but prioritized in various phases of project planning and implementation, nurturing their active involvement in decision-making processes concerning rural development. Moreover, MGNREGA stresses women-centric activities like the building of water bodies and rural infrastructure, catering to the precise needs and challenges faced by women in rural communities. This Act also ensures flexible work hours, accommodating women's responsibilities in managing household chores and caregiving duties. Moreover, MGNREGA helps in skill development and training initiatives tailored for women, equipping them with valued skills for better livelihood prospects beyond MGNREGA projects. Eventually, MGNREGA will serve as a key instrument in empowering rural women, enabling them to access employment opportunities, equal wages, skill improvement, and active participation in community development endeavors. According to the MGNREGA, women must hold at least one-third of the positions created by the program (Employment Statistics in Focus, 2023).

Impact of policies on women's empowerment

Working women hostel (1972–1973)

In 1917, the Haryali Centre for Rural Development presented a report to the Indian Ministry of Women and Child Development, highlighting significant findings. Since its inception in 1972–1973, the program has sanctioned 916 hostels nationwide, benefiting approximately 68,656 working women. Between 1986 and 1995, the establishment of working women hostels peaked, with a maximum of twenty (29%) being set up.

The report revealed that in 79% of the operational hostels surveyed, medical first aid was readily available. However, in Surat, 84% of the hostels lacked essential first-aid supplies. Moreover, in dormitories across Ahmedabad, Chennai, and Bangalore, 60% were found to be without a first aid kit.

Examining the demographic profile, the report indicated that 80% of working women aged between 21 and 30 utilized the hostel facilities, along with 87% of graduate/postgraduate women. In Surat, 94% of Hindu women and 81% of women from the general category accessed these accommodations, as per responses from 1,846 participants.

In a later update by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on February 4, 2022, it was noted that states such as Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, and Uttarakhand had no operational working hostels at the time.

The data presented in Table 1 highlights varying levels of support for working women hostels across different states in India. Kerala emerges as a frontrunner with the most hostels, demonstrating a significant commitment to providing accommodation facilities for working women. Maharashtra follows closely, indicating substantial efforts in this regard as well. However, Tamil Nadu leads in funding allocation, suggesting a robust financial investment supporting working women hostels. Despite these positive trends, disparities have been observed, such as the lower number of hostels in Delhi and the lower funding in Gujarat, which indicate potential gaps in addressing the accommodation needs of working women in these regions. While progress has been made in establishing and funding hostels, further analysis is warranted to ensure equitable distribution of resources and effective implementation to support working women across the nation.

Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (1921–2022)

Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 targeted beneficiaries are pregnant women, lactating mothers, children up to 6 years of age, and adolescent girls. For this universal cause, 13,94,869 Anganwadi Centres run all over India. As of 2024, February 29, 60,51,956 pregnant women, 50,55,026 lactating mothers, 42,53,887 children (0–6 months), 4,02,51,430 children (6 months–3 years), 4,46,88,370 children (3–6 years), and aadhaar verified adolescent girls 18,85,893 presently received the benefit of scheme (Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2024).^{*} On the grounds of population, Uttar Pradesh is the biggest state of India. The following table colors show that Uttar Pradesh state is highly positive for providing nutritional support to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and Children aged between 0 and 6 years. Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh have also done a good job under the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. The data shows that the Jharkhand state is doing positive work for adolescent girls' safety and health (Table 2).

According to a 2017 report by the government of India, anemia in women and girls (15–49 years) has been reduced to 17.7% from 53.1% (Pingali & Abraham, 2019).

BBBP Program (January 22, 2015)

As a flagship project to address the gender imbalance in the SRB and to guarantee girls' social protection, the Indian government launched the BBBP in 2015. Gupta *et al.* (2021) noted that Haryana recorded a rise in girls per 1000 boys from 876 in 2015 to 923 in 2019. After the BBBP program, the SRB increased by 835/month in Haryana.

Manorama YearBook (2023) reported the national sex ratio at birth has improved by 19 points, from 918 in 2014–2015 to 937 in 2020–2021. The second imported achievement was overall enrollment from 75.51% in 2014–2015 to 79.46% in 2020–2021. The percentage of girls enrolled in secondary schools has increased. The number of female under-5 child deaths decreased from 45 in 2014 to 36 in 2018.

^{*} Data on dashboard is provisional and subject to reconciliation of offline data sync from Poshan Tracker Mobile App

Table 1: Top five states where maximum working women hostels are functional with day care facility and funds distribution by Ministry of Women and Child Development

Name of the state	Number of hostels
Kerala	129
Maharashtra	77
Karnataka	62
Tamil Nadu	54
Delhi	17
Name of the state	Fund for year 2021–2022 (in lakhs)
Tamil Nadu	350.25
Kerala	273.97
Madhya Pradesh	191.19
Manipur	164.70
Gujrat	69.70

The date for India is from 494 working women hostels are functional in the country, with daycare facilities for the children, by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2023 (<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1897358>). Copyright 2023 by the Government of India.

Additionally, the percentage of institutional delivery has improved, rising from 87% in 2014–2015 to 94.8% in 2020–2021.

According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2021), over the past 6 years since its inception, the BBBP scheme has been dedicated to transforming societal perceptions to recognize and respect the rights of the girl child. Through this initiative, there has been a significant increase in awareness and sensitization among the public regarding the prevalence of gender bias and the crucial role communities play in its eradication. Encouragingly, there have been notable improvements in the SRB nationally, with a 16-point increase observed from 918 (2014–2015) to 934 (2019–2020). Among the 640 districts covered under the BBBP, 422 have demonstrated enhancements in SRB from 2014–2015 to 2018–2019. Remarkably, districts such as Mau (Uttar Pradesh), Karnal (Haryana), Mahendergarh (Haryana), Rewari (Haryana), and Patiala (Punjab), which previously exhibited significantly low SRB in 2014–2015, have shown substantial improvements following the implementation of the scheme. For instance, Mau's SRB rose from 694 (2014–2015) to 951 (2019–2020), Karnal's from 758 (2014–2015) to 898 (2019–2020), Mahendergarh's from 791 (2014–2015) to 919 (2019–2020), Rewari's from 803 (2014–2015) to 924 (2019–2020), and Patiala's from 847 (2014–2015) to 933 (2019–2020). In the realm of education, the gross enrolment ratio of girls in secondary level schools has risen from 77.45 (2014–2015) to 81.32, while the percentage of schools equipped with operational separate toilets for girls has increased from 92.1% in 2014–2015 to 95.1% in 2018–2019.

Maurya (2021) researched the "Impact of BBBP program in Rajasthan, a study of changing child sex ratio from 2015 to 2020." The study was conducted in five districts: Jaipur (897–927), Sawai Madhopur (913–918), Bharatpur (914–943), and Jhunjhunu (949–979). All districts show significant records from 2016 to 2020. However, in Shri Ganganagar, the most significant decrease was observed from 952 in 2015–2016 to 928 in 2018–2019.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (2020) surveyed 14 states' urban and rural areas. Based on their CSR rankings, 816 households were chosen as a sample from the 17 districts of these 14 states. The study revealed that from 923 in 2015–2016 to 931 in 2018–2019, the SRB showed an improvement trend of 08 points nationally. Mahendragarh noted a significant gain, increasing 109 points between 2015–2016 and 2018–2019, from 809 to 916. From the 17 districts, five districts, Thrissur, Morena, Cuddalore, Kamrup Metropolitan, and Nayagarh, it was noted a worsened position subsequently –3, –4, –7, –51, and –54 points. In Senapati, a major decrease was observed from 974 in 2015–2016 to 911 in 2018–2019. Table 3 reveals the data for 3 top and worst states on different parameters.

Table 2: State-wise Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0: Infrastructure and beneficiary as of 2024, March 31*

State/UT	Anganwadi centers	Total eligible beneficiaries	Aadhaar verified beneficiaries	Pregnant women	Lactating mothers	Children (0–6 months)	Children (6 months–3 years)	Children (3–6 years)	Adolescent girls beneficiaries
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	720	13,212	11,982	713	659	605	6,897	4,338	RNA
Andhra Pradesh	55,610	30,93,142	28,41,674	2,51,278	1,92,822	1,58,051	13,24,181	11,66,810	18,671
Arunachal Pradesh	5,871	83,240	60,642	1,865	2,69	2,538	32,703	43,525	15,344
Assam	61,855	30,84,599	29,50,534	96,347	84,952	91,686	11,80,409	16,31,205	1,43,902
Bihar	1,14,983	1,00,21,006	97,97,033	4,06,972	3,23,692	2,25,964	35,04,063	55,60,315	2,16,013
Chhattisgarh	52,167	25,99,463	24,57,212	1,51,721	1,21,445	1,03,554	10,44,067	11,78,676	1,19,990
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	405	34,218	32,376	3,960	3,030	2,790	14,909	9,529	RNA
Delhi	10,898	7,03,630	6,95,470	58,065	60,892	59,227	3,49,831	1,75,615	RNA
Goa	1,262	66,431	64,924	3,751	4,732	4,334	35,012	18,602	RNA
Gujarat	53,065	37,14,787	36,24,853	2,21,092	1,91,944	1,72,256	15,02,239	16,27,256	68,016
Haryana	25,964	19,41,158	16,89,106	1,11,921	1,06,073	64,124	7,08,516	9,50,524	15,900
Himachal Pradesh	18,926	5,66,964	5,54,610	36,391	36,483	34,533	2,21,488	2,38,069	16,704
Jammu and Kashmir	28,195	8,06,825	7,93,502	41,839	37,711	25,876	3,22,175	3,79,224	19,168
Jharkhand	38,423	32,56,085	30,01,982	1,77,539	1,23,731	1,03,253	13,50,318	15,01,244	2,90,792
Karnataka	65,911	38,92,456	37,96,606	2,39,232	1,57,855	1,21,434	16,69,230	17,04,705	1,275
Kerala	33,117	22,27,664	21,33,014	1,28,885	1,04,993	89,247	8,04,796	10,99,743	18,628
Ladakh	1,149	18,593	18,18	939	813	631	7,519	8,691	RNA
Madhya Pradesh	97,330	75,08,903	72,19,902	4,33,866	3,47,734	2,96,238	28,27,477	36,03,588	1,54,782
Maharashtra	1,10,475	69,09,209	66,31,275	3,24,046	2,92,128	2,35,782	27,35,413	33,21,840	1,14,257
Manipur	11,523	2,80,007	2,66,127	8,419	8,453	8,530	94,381	1,60,224	45,188
Meghalaya	5,897	4,01,372	3,85,365	6,440	7,971	7,782	1,50,426	2,28,753	52,502
Mizoram	2,244	1,18,749	1,11,846	5,626	3,631	3,745	44,558	61,189	21,708
Nagaland	3,980	1,13,619	66,426	1,651	2,810	2,757	40,103	66,298	25,926
Odisha	74,199	40,85,358	40,68,098	2,83,576	2,24,519	1,94,701	15,16,121	18,66,441	2,76,793
Puducherry	855	37,728	36,334	3,438	3,327	2,702	24,310	3,951	RNA
Punjab	27,314	15,42,245	14,78,945	85,757	92,924	86,440	6,49,223	6,27,901	29,344
Rajasthan	61,902	44,41,966	41,48,509	3,04,090	2,33,670	1,53,139	19,58,741	17,92,326	43,110
Sikkim	1,308	33,624	30,761	1,324	1,508	1,458	12,355	16,979	8,471
Tamil Nadu	54,449	40,52,095	39,90,929	3,00,337	2,26,961	2,04,493	17,44,546	15,75,758	44,271
Telangana	35,697	21,73,595	20,73,563	1,57,575	99,319	83,673	9,79,403	8,53,625	30,883
Tripura	10,145	3,36,151	3,11,847	16,276	13,073	11,533	1,26,592	1,68,677	34,792
UT- Chandigarh	450	46,530	46,257	3,189	3,220	3,211	16,487	20,423	RNA
Uttar Pradesh	1,89,154	2,22,59,633	2,19,89,161	15,52,960	11,49,186	9,40,783	96,45,670	89,71,034	2,29,489
Uttarakhand	20,044	7,66,749	7,38,929	51,060	47,604	34,504	3,84,171	2,49,410	71,691
West Bengal	1,19,481	86,91,556	85,36,332	5,36,788	4,33,344	4,03,910	32,71,842	40,45,672	NA

The date for India are from Poshan Abhiyan PM's overarching scheme for holistic nourishment, by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2023 (<https://www.poshantracker.in/statistics>). Copyright 2023 by Poshan Tracker.

UT: Union Territories, RNA: Record not available.

OSC (2015)

Ministry of Women and Child Development (2022f) reported substantial coverage nationwide, with 758 OSCs approved for 734 districts and 708 already operational in 35 states/union territories. The fact that they have assisted over 5.40 lakh women until March 2022 underscores their crucial role in providing support and services to women affected by violence. During the last 2 years, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2023c) reported that 6,68,139 women have been assisted/benefited by the one-stop center. In Ladakh- Territory, there is one OSC, but zero cases have been registered (Table 4).

SSY (January 22, 2015)

The SSY provides financial security if they are required to pay for expenses associated with the girl's higher education and marriage. In the year 2017, 1,26,00,000 accounts were opened, amounting to 19,20,00,000. According to the report, the program was designed to help middle-class and lower-class families empower their female children and teach them the value of saving and practicing financial self-discipline. The 1,42,73,910 new accounts opened under SSY between 01.04.2018 and 31.10.2021. Uttar Pradesh is the state with a higher 29,12,632 account holders (Ministry of Finance, 2021). Until December

2022, the total account holder is 3,25,12,095, and the amount deposited is 1,62,154 crore (Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, National Savings Institute, 2022). National Saving Institute claimed that 3,82,16,755 registered subscribers saved 216311.27 crore under SSY (Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, National Savings Institute, 2024).

In Table 5, five states with the highest and lowest number of accounts under the scheme have been mentioned. Uttar Pradesh leads with the highest number of accounts, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra follow closely, followed by Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, which also show a substantial number of accounts reflecting a strong impact of SSY. On the other end, Lakshadweep has the lowest number of accounts, which may be due to its small population and remote location. The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman have a relatively low number of accounts but higher savings amounts, possibly indicating higher average savings per account.

Swadhar Greh scheme

The Swadhar Greh scheme is an initiative by the Government of India to provide temporary accommodation, rehabilitation, and support

Table 3: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao program impacts

Particulars	Figures in numbers after implication of the scheme at India level
Top 3 states with the highest sex ratio of India	Sex ratio of India
Kerala	1,084
Tamil Nadu	995
Andhra Pradesh	992
3 State with the lowest sex ratio in India	
Haryana	877
Jammu Kashmir	883
Sikkim	889
Child sex ratio (0–6 years) – top performers	
Mizoram	971
Meghalaya	970
Chhattisgarh	964
Child sex ratio (0–6 years) – lowest performers	
Haryana	830
Punjab	846
Jammu and Kashmir	859
Union territories (UTs) – top overall sex ratio	
Puducherry	1038
Lakshadweep	946
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	878
Union territories (UTs) – lowest overall sex ratio	
Daman and Diu	618
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	775
Chandigarh	818
Top 3 states with gross enrollment ratio at higher education level in 2021–2022	Figures in %
Chandigarh	64.8
Puducherry	61.5
Delhi	49.0
Top 3 states with gross enrollment ratio at lower higher education level in 2021–2022	
Bihar	17.1
Jharkhand	18.6
Uttar Pradesh	24.1

The date from Indian Sex Ratio 2024 State-wise, NFHS-5 Survey Estimated Sex Ratio, by Piyush, 2024 (<https://www.studyiq.com/articles/sex-ratio-in-india/>). Copyright 2024 by StudyIQ. The date from Trends & analysis of gross enrolment ratio in higher education in India (2017–2018 to 2021–2022), by Mehta, n.d., Education for All in India (<https://educationforallindia.com/trends-analysis-of-gross-enrolment-ratio-ger-in-higher-education-in-india-2024/>). Copyright 2023 by Education for All in India - Enfold WordPress Theme by Kriesi.

services to women in difficult circumstances. These circumstances may include destitute women, women victims of domestic violence trafficking, and those who are in need of institutional support. Swadhar Greh Scheme is crucial in providing holistic support to vulnerable women, helping them rebuild their lives and regain their dignity and independence. The statistics presented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development for 2022 show that the Swadhar Greh Scheme performs exceptionally well in Odisha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. However, there are no available figures regarding the number of Swadhar Greh homes in Bihar, Goa, Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Haryana, and Ladakh (Table 6). Odisha has the highest number of Swadhar Grehs (54), followed by Karnataka with 52 and Tamil Nadu with 36. At the same time, Odisha shows the highest capacity at 1,620, closely followed by Karnataka at 1,560. On the other hand, states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan show moderate numbers of Swadhar Grehs but lower occupancy rates compared to their capacity, which may be an indication of underutilization of these facilities needs more information and awareness amongst the women.

Table 4: Top 5 state operational OSCs along with the number of women assisted since the inception of the scheme

State	Number of operational OSCs	State	Women assisted (2021–2022)
Uttar Pradesh	75	Rajasthan	19,224
Madhya Pradesh	52	Uttar Pradesh	18,063
Tamil Nadu and	38	Madhya Pradesh	14,573
Bihar			
Maharashtra	37	Rajasthan	14,391
Assam/Gujarat/	33	Telangana	12,753
Telangana			

The data for India are from OSCs, by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2022f (<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1846140>). Copyright 2022 by Government of India
OSC: One stop centre.

Table 5: Accounts opened under Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

Statement showing details of states with the highest number of accounts		
Name of the State/UT	Number of accounts as of February 29, 2024	Amount saved (Rs. in cr)
Uttar Pradesh	4,254,170	23492.47
Tamil Nadu	3,574,353	22053.29
Maharashtra	3,458,511	20563.08
Karnataka	2,835,173	20528.29
Madhya Pradesh	2,787,475	7631.05
Statement showing details of states with lowest number of accounts		
Name of the state/UT	Number of accounts as of February 29, 2024	Amount saved (Rs. in cr)
Lakshadweep	1,085	3.75
Ladakh	9,519	52.59
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	13,056	101.04
Mizoram	18,276	36.70
The Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman	19,917	131.20

The date from Indian Statement showing state-wise No. of accounts and collection in post offices and banks under Sukanya Samriddhi account scheme Ministry of Finance, by Ministry of Finance, Government of India, 2024 (<https://www.nsiindia.gov.in/writereaddata/FileUploads/StateWise%20Feb%2024%20SSA.pdf>). Copyright 2013 by National Savings Institute
UT: Union territories.

PMUY

“Clean Fuel, Better Life” was the campaign slogan introducing the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Scheme. Under the program, eight crore LPG connections were released, contributing to the LPG coverage rising from 62% on 2016 May 1 to 99.8% on 2021 April 1. Based on the data given in Table 7, it is known that in 2023, women from the states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar will avail the maximum benefits of the Ujjwala scheme. In 2023, the government distributed the maximum number of LPG connections in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Assam. The overall high numbers of beneficiaries and connections across states indicate the success and widespread adoption of the PMUY. Data for the number of connections in the year 2023–2024 also indicates the continued growth of the program and hitting the primary objectives of “Better Life.”

PMMVY

Since the PMMVY was introduced in 2017–2018 and ran through February 2, 2023, over 3.59 crore beneficiaries have been registered.

Table 6: State-Wise Number of Swadhar Grehs, Capacity, and Occupancy for FY 2021–2022

State/UT	No. of Swadhar Greh	Capacity	Occupancy 2021–2022
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1	30	9
Andhra Pradesh	21	630	438
Arunachal Pradesh	1	30	22
Assam	16	480	242
Bihar	-	-	-
Chandigarh	1	30	11
Chhattisgarh	3	90	52
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	-	-	-
Delhi	2	60	41
Goa	-	-	-
Gujarat	8	240	117
Haryana	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	1	30	9
Jammu and Kashmir	2	60	27
Jharkhand	5	150	18
Karnataka	52	1,560	1,445
Kerala	7	210	165
Ladakh	-	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	15	450	273
Maharashtra	9	270	126
Manipur	23	690	431
Meghalaya	2	60	15
Mizoram	11	330	88
Nagaland	2	60	34
Odisha	54	1,620	1,667
Puducherry	1	30	10
Punjab	2	60	34
Rajasthan	8	240	203
Sikkim	1	30	18
Tamil Nadu	36	1,080	1,071
Telangana	21	630	389
Tripura	4	120	64
Uttar Pradesh	14	420	342
Uttarakhand	1	30	RNA
West Bengal	33	990	802
Total	357	10,710	8,163

Note: The data for India are from Shelter Homes Under Swadhar Greh Scheme, by the Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2022e (<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1809697>). Copyright 2022 by Government of India.

RNA: Record not available, UT: Union territories.

Additionally, more than 3.21 crore recipients received maternity benefits totaling more than Rs. 14,428.35 crore (including both the Central and State share) during the aforementioned time frame. Pregnant women and lactating moms from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, including those who were employed in the unorganized sector at the time of childbirth, are eligible for these benefits under the PMMVY program. They must be between the ages of 18 and 7 months and 55. To discourage prenatal sex selection and encourage girl childhood, PMMVY also offers a maternity bonus of Rs. 6,000 for the second child, provided that the second kid is a girl (Ministry of Women & Child Development, 2023a). In terms of PMMVY implementation, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Rajasthan rank among the top five States/UTs nationwide. Telangana and Odisha have not yet begun implementing the program. In order to create a roadmap for the scheme's quicker implementation, the Women and Child Development Ministry recently arranged regional workshops with state officials in Chandigarh, Jaipur, and Guwahati.

Table 8 reveals significant variations in the number of beneficiaries over the 3 years. Some states like Gujarat, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh have shown a significant increase in the number of beneficiaries in the year 2022–2023 as compared to 2020–2021. On the other hand, Tamil

Table 7: Beneficiaries and Connections of liquified petroleum gas under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana as of December 31, 2023

State/UT	Number of beneficiaries (as of December 31, 2023)	Number of connections 2023–2024 (April to December 2023)
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	13,656	212
Andhra Pradesh	83,176	3,00,759
Arunachal Pradesh	52,947	3,702
Assam	48,56,261	4,42,137
Bihar	1,13,51,240	6,16,358
Chandigarh	1,398	739
Chhattisgarh	35,98,381	1,10,202
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1,6085	1,059
Delhi	1,99,737	57,733
Goa	1,717	452
Gujarat	41,46,988	3,04,145
Haryana	9,94,723	2,27,621
Himachal Pradesh	1,46,034	5,268
Jammu and Kashmir	12,55,826	10,702
Jharkhand	37,91,854	1,45,725
Karnataka	40,02,108	2,45,415
Kerala	3,69,733	28525
Ladakh	11,089	2
Lakshadweep	334	30
Madhya Pradesh	84,45,830	2,19,106
Maharashtra	50,87,974	1,98,774
Manipur	2,13,600	11,571
Meghalaya	2,68,324	53,474
Mizoram	34,248	653
Nagaland	1,13,954	22,079
Odisha	54,63,807	1,43,329
Puducherry	17,945	3,108
Punjab	13,28,154	44,357
Rajasthan	70,30,551	1,04,426
Sikkim	17,886	4,091
Tamil Nadu	39,55,494	2,51,241
Telangana	11,54,669	2090
Tripura	3,07,244	23,741
Uttar Pradesh	1,81,79,708	6,78,583
Uttarakhand	5,15,242	18,823
West Bengal	1,23,71,108	86

The data for India are from State/UT-wise Number of Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) Beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) as on December 12, 2023, by the Open Government Data, 2024 (<https://data.gov.in/resource/stateut-wise-number-liquified-petroleum-gas-lpg-beneficiaries-under-pradhan-mantri-ujjwala>). Copyright © 2012–2015 by Government of India. The data for India are from State/UT-wise Number of LPG Connections Released under PMUY from 2021 to 2024, by the Open Government Data, 2024 (<https://data.gov.in/resource/stateut-wise-number-liquified-petroleum-gas-lpg-connections-released-under-pradhan-mantri>). Copyright © 2012–2015 by Government of India.

UT: Union territories.

Nadu and Punjab have shown notable decreases in these beneficiaries. Constant high beneficiary numbers have been noticed in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which may be due to high populations. In contrast, low-population states like Ladakh and Lakshadweep reflect low numbers.

Current employment status of women in India

Due to ingrained prejudices in the societal structure, women have historically been excluded from possibilities in society and the economy, particularly in emerging nations like India. Women are far less likely than men to work, earn less money, and work mostly in manual labor that requires little expertise or self-employment. As evident from Table 9, in 2022, women's educational attainment was lower, with just 33.6% of them having completed secondary education or above. These elements play a part in the substantial obstacles that prevent

Table 8: Number of beneficiaries provided maternity benefits during the 2020–2023

State/UT	Number of beneficiaries		
	2020–2021	2021–2022	2022–2023
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1,230	877	1,073
Andhra Pradesh	1,22,338	33,695	1,88,421
Arunachal Pradesh	5,544	2,218	3,809
Assam	1,27,227	1,70,000	1,51,946
Bihar	8,77,648	2,68,095	6,24,406
Chandigarh	4,370	4,483	4,009
Chhattisgarh	98,787	11,2862	1,29,180
Delhi	49,106	60,463	67,209
Goa	3,417	1,831	2,771
Gujarat	79,270	88,411	2,02,679
Haryana	63,750	91,426	1,25,622
Himachal Pradesh	35,082	33,646	30,720
Jammu and Kashmir	36,448	54,170	49,384
Jharkhand	1,07,564	55,894	68,023
Karnataka	3,11,278	1,15,634	2,73,608
Kerala	1,23,671	1,55,314	1,38,850
Ladakh	631	408	82
Lakshadweep	272	233	0
Madhya Pradesh	5,20,607	5,38,441	5,24,437
Maharashtra	4,25,613	4,64,910	3,27,640
Manipur	11,680	5,076	5,536
Meghalaya	7,586	8,645	9,328
Mizoram	4,802	5,250	6,113
Nagaland	4,955	3,087	4,308
Puducherry	3,324	4,597	5,200
Punjab	75,855	39,038	27,229
Rajasthan	2,38,646	2,91,576	3,55,338
Sikkim	1,584	696	1,442
Tamil Nadu	2,64,332	1,48,656	46,762
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1,987	2,399	3,251
Tripura	14,529	9,810	15,249
Uttar Pradesh	8,49,171	4,83,412	8,91,274
Uttarakhand	47,114	35,892	5,746
West Bengal	36	41	4,19,092

The data for India are from State/UT-wise number of eligible beneficiaries provided maternity benefits under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana from 2020–2021 to 2022–2023, by the Open Government Data, 2024 (<https://data.gov.in/resource/stateut-wise-number-eligible-beneficiaries-provided-maternity-benefits-under-pradhan>). Copyright 2012–2015 by Government of India.

UT: Union Territories.

women from entering the Indian labor market. The International Labour Organization (2024) reported that youth and adult women decreased labor force participation rates (LFPR) from 2000 to 2022. The fall in female LFPR was more pronounced in the preceding decades (p. 113). Similarly, between 2000 and 2019, the worker-population ratio for women demonstrated a downward tendency in the decades prior. The average real monthly earnings for youth and adult women involved in regular salaried and casual employees or regular salaried jobs decreased in 2022, whereas the average real income of those who worked as independent contractors increased slightly.

Further, in accordance with the data in Table 9, 31.7% of women are employed, with a low unemployment rate of 3.3%. 16–17% of employment rates are for regular, organized, and formal jobs, while only 9.4% are for high- and medium-skill jobs. Despite 33.6% having secondary education or higher, this does not fully translate into skilled employment. A decline in labor force participation and worker population ratios for both youths and adults was observed from 2000 to 2019, but improvement in 2022 was observed primarily among adults. Regular salaried women earn the most per average monthly earnings in 2022, significantly more than self-employed and casual

workers. Overall, educational achievement is relatively high, but it is not fully reflected in employment metrics, which suggests the need for improved and skilled employment for women.

Significant scientific studies on women's empowerment

Numerous studies have been conducted to understand women's empowerment status in India. Here, a few impactful outcomes are summarized with brief details of studies and their results.

Sankaran & Madhav (2011) wrote a paper on "Gender equality and social dialogue in India." This paper was part of a comparative research project. For research, the researchers had been focused on bipartite collective agreements reached without the involvement of state or federal labor authorities in mediation attempts. This paper addresses how women may improve their working conditions in India under the present legal and legislative framework using collective bargaining and social discourse. The findings of the work were that the Women's Reservations Bill had secured a one-third position in the local bodies, both urban and rural (panchayat). This statute has greatly enhanced the ability of women to participate in politics and administration. It offers them a stage on which to speak up and be heard. Women's economic status rapidly increased up to 1993; about 93% of women who work are employed in informal or non-organized sectors. Another significant development was found in membership in the trade union: 26.8% of women members were in 2002.

Chakravarty *et al.* (2013) worked on Women's empowerment in India: Issues, challenges and future directions. In this working paper, researchers try to understand the concept of women's empowerment holistically and look critically at efforts to empower women with special emphasis on self-help Groups (SHG) based on empirical work done in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand. In the study, the authors used qualitative and quantitative methods. The study found that 66% of married women are involved in income-generation activities as well as household work. The information uncovers a few critical perceptions that 80% of women joined SHGs the gathering for money age while 6% are permitted to spend their pay on their own. Further, 82% of the women don't visit specialists in the midst of disease, nor are they mindful of the free clinical benefits given by the public authority.

Sarkar (2016) wrote a chapter on "Empowerment of women in India: Issues and challenges." In this chapter, the writer discusses the participation in the decision-making concept that women made up just 14.14% of the Indian administrative workforce in 2012, 15.17% of the Indian statistical workforce, 19.17% of the Indian foreign service, 30.28% of the Indian economic workforce, and only 11.76% of the Indian trade workforce in 2014. According to the aforementioned statistics, there is still a long way to go until women are equally represented in the decision-making process, a crucial element for women's empowerment.

Arya *et al.* (2021) conducted a descriptive research study on the "Influence of microfinance on the economic empowerment of women." The researcher selected 400 rural women using a multistage sampling technique. Economic empowerment selected indicators are household income and household savings. The researchers found that microfinance positively impacts women's economic empowerment.

Nayak and Billava (2021) wrote a review paper on "Political empowerment of women and the marginalized in India." The authors selected 63 relevant studies for this article, mostly from 21st-century studies. Women's reservations and reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes (SCs/STs) appear to be operating successfully on the surface. The researchers believe that by empowering more than one million women and a significant number of Dalits through free and fair elections at the village, block, and district levels in rural India—although there is still a long way to go—reservation for women and the marginalized has opened the door to revolutionary changes of a political, social, and cultural nature.

Table 9: Women's employment characteristics, labor force participation, and income

Women employment characteristics, 2022 (%)							
Worker population ratio	Unemployment rate	Regular employment	Organized sector	Formal employment	High- and medium-skill jobs	Education secondary level and higher	Population
31.7	3.3	16.6	17.5	17.1	9.4	33.6	49.6
Youths and adults women labor force participation rate, 2000, 2012, 2019, and 2022 (%)							
2000		2012		2019		2022	
Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult
34	42	24	35	16	28	21.1	38.7
Youths and adults women worker population ratio, 2000, 2012, 2019, and 2022 (%)							
2000		2012		2019		2022	
Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult
32	41	22	34	13	28	19.1	38.4
Average monthly earnings and wages among youths and adults, 2022 (nominal values in rupees)							
Youth			Adult				
Self-employed	Regular salaried	Casual workers	Self-employed	Regular salaried	Casual workers		
4,453	16,124	5,929	5,603	15,414	5,577		

The data for India are from India Employment Report 2024: Youth employment, education, and skills. Institute for Human Development, by the Institute for Human Development, 2024 (https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_921154.pdf). Copyright 2024 by Institute for Human Development.

Sobha Rani (2021) focused on "A study on women Empowerment in India." In the study, the author discusses women's rights, Legislation, and schemes for women's empowerment in India. The study found that the grassroots problem is a lack of education and women not free to make decisions. The study recommended that special attention has to be paid to education for women, and it is necessary to organize awareness campaigns to inform women, particularly those from disadvantaged groups, of their legal rights.

Rashid (2022) found in her study that about 35% of women report that their male partners have physically abused them, with 7% reporting regular abuse. Rape cases 3,083, Gang rape 251, Beatind 361, and Acid Burning 36 were registered in 2017.

Biswas & Banu (2022) worked on "Economic empowerment of rural and urban women in India: A comparative analysis." The study was quantitative and entirely based on secondary databases. The study's major finding was that the participation rate of women in the labour force was 24.7% in rural areas and 18.5% in urban areas in 2019–2020. The rural women's work participation rate was higher (70.2%), and the unemployment rate was lower than in urban areas. The study's findings indicate that rural women are more actively participating in the workforce across all measured variables.

Panda & Gope (2023) focused on the "Role of non-governmental organizations for women empowerment through decision-making in India." The study's objective was to understand a non-government organization's role in women's empowerment through decision-making. The researcher conducted qualitative research methodology. Non-government organizations like SEWA, Jagori, Women on Wings, and Hungar Project and Pradhan work towards creating a safe, collaborative environment for decision-making. The study found decision-making and implementing the decision will be the main basis of women's empowerment.

PK *et al.* (2023) worked on "Women empowerment in digital India and the Kerala knowledge economy." The study adopted descriptive-analytical and exploratory methodology to conclude the three objectives of the study. A study found that models like SHG - Bank

Linkage Programme are successful for States like Kerala with a huge network of SHGs of women, banking networks, and teledensity since they could empower women through micro-enterprises of women managed through collective efforts like SHG.

Sharma *et al.* (2023) did a study on, "An empirical study on the status of women empowerment in India." The study aims to pinpoint the four elements—economic education, gender, reversal, and freedom—that contribute to women's societal empowerment. It is empirical research based on a Delhi neighborhood survey. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire and a random sample technique. A questionnaire focusing on these four elements that encourage and support women's empowerment in Indian society has been designed as a result of the research. The study found men and women perceive the four factors—education, economy, independence, and gender reversal as a role for women's empowerment—in very different ways.

CONCLUSION

The symbol of women's empowerment is revered in the Indian tradition. In changing times, we must make the younger generation carriers of our ancient culture and spread the values of respect, security, and self-reliance toward women. The prosperity of women ensures the prosperity of the world.

In India, empowering women is essential for the country's development. In pursuit of this objective, the Women's Empowerment Act has been passed, providing for a 33% reservation for women. The national gender ratio has improved for the 1st time to 1020. The duration of maternity leave has been extended to 26 weeks. Under the PM Maternity Security Act, examinations of more than 4.73 crore pregnant women have been conducted. Under the Sukanya Samriddhi Scheme, 3.2 crore accounts have been opened. By providing LPG gas cylinders, smoke-free kitchens have been provided to nearly ten crore households. Under the PM Housing Scheme for rural areas, 72% of the ownership has been put in the name of women. The government has taken steps to end the practice of triple talaq to empower Muslim women. Permanent commissions have been given to female officers in 12 armed forces and services. Entry of women as Agniveers in all three armed forces has been initiated.

Economic empowerment of women accelerates development, and their access to education inspires global progress. Women's leadership promotes inclusivity and motivates positive change. Empowering women through women's leadership is the most impactful approach. India is progressing in this direction, and schemes like the BBBP (Save Daughters, Educate Daughters) initiative, conducted by the government, are crucial initiatives that have paved the way for progress in the health and education of women. The government-operated Ujjwala scheme has played a significant role in empowering women by providing them with better health and freeing their families from the burden of smoke. It has also effectively addressed the impact of air pollution and deforestation, making both life and the environment safer. The employment provisions introduced in India have brought about tangible benefits for women, including equal pay, maternity leave, increased representation in decision-making bodies, and access to skill development programs. These initiatives have played a crucial role in promoting gender equality, empowering women, and fostering inclusive economic growth in the country. However, continued efforts are needed to strengthen and expand these provisions further to ensure women's full participation and advancement in the workforce.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author has designed the study and solely carried all the work of this manuscript.

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- The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.
- The author certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.
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