

Kanyashree Prakalpa as a catalyzer for development of women's education in West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Kanyashree Prakalpa initiative in advancing women's education in West Bengal, India. This study investigates the enrolment among female students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa in West Bengal and makes a comparison between enrolment before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa. The methodological techniques used in this study are qualitative and documentary. Documentary analysis addresses the goals of the study by reviewing the available reports from the Department of Higher Education, Government of India's All-India Survey on Higher Education. Results showed that before the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa, the percentage of female enrolment fluctuated from around 43.94% to 53.85% at the undergraduate level and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa, the percentage increased, reaching as high as 59.04% in 2019-2020. At the post-graduate level before the implementation, the percentage of female enrolment fluctuated around 43.94% to 53.85%. After the implementation, the percentage increased, reaching as high as 59.04% in 2019-2020 at the postgraduate level. In conclusion, this research highlights Kanyashree Prakalpas as a promising model for the development of women's education and empowerment.

Keywords: Women; Development of Education; Kanyashree Prakalpa; Pre-implementation; Post-implementation; Undergraduate; Postgraduate; West Bengal.

1. Introduction

A country cannot advance if women are not empowered. A country can only advance by employing all its human resources (Mehaboob & Halder 2019; Das, 2018). Only until women are granted the same opportunities as males in all spheres of social life will it be feasible. Thus, empowering women is crucial to achieving sustainable development in society (Sen, 2016; Mandal, 2016). According to Swamiji, inadequate education is the primary cause of the numerous issues facing women in our nation. The solution to uplift and save Indian women is now required. The path was education. Although women face numerous serious issues, none of them are insurmountable with the magic word "education" (Crook & Udogu, 2006). One of the most crucial topics for the country's development is education (Mukherjee, 2019). Education is a continuous process that aims to fully develop a person's individuality through self-awareness, self-perfection, self-discovery, and self-manifestation. Therefore, we must advance education to enhance human resources (Molla & Madhu, 2023). Inequalities and disparities are eliminated through education, allowing individuals to regain their position both inside and outside of their families (Maity, 2016). Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda made determined attempts to empower women during the British

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colonial era (Bandyopadhyay, 2020; Sen, 2016). After independence, the Indian Constitution has several articles about the general protection of women's rights, including Article 12 of part III of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality regardless of gender, caste, creed, or other distinctions (Basu, 2005; Halder, 2018). Under the Department of Women Development and Social Welfare, Kanyashree Prakalpa is one of the most well-known and creative programmes for female students in West Bengal. It has gained great acclaim on a national and worldwide scale (Kannar, 2018; www.wbkanyashree.gov.in; Das, Sikder & Halder, 2022; Sen, 2018). Kanyashree Prakalpa was started on 8th March 2013 and its effect started on 1st October 2013 (Nandi & Dash, 2021; Saha, 2015; Biswas, 2021; Bandyopadhyay, 2020; Biwas & Deb, 2014; Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2023; Sen, 2016; Chatterjee, 2023; Mandal, 2021). The primary goals of the initiative were to encourage higher education and to outlaw child marriage, which will demonstrate a decline in the rates of mother and child death (www.wbkanyashree.gov.in; Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2023; Chatterjee, 2023; Mandal, 2021; Ghara & Roy, 2017; Mukherjee, 2019; Kannar, 2018). Kanyashree Prakalpa is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme (www.wbkanyashree.gov.in; Das, Sikder & Halder, 2022; Saha, 2015; Ghara & Roy, 2017; Nasir Uddin & Saha, 2023; Biswas, 2021; Bandyopadhyay, 2020; Biwas & Deb, 2014; Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2023; Mandal, 2021; Kannar, 2018; Sen, 2018; Halder, 2018) the initiative, comprising three elements labeled 'K1,' 'K2,' and 'K3' since its commencement, focuses on addressing the immediate challenges faced by girls who are currently at a high risk of both school dropout and early marriage. Specifically, the program targets adolescents aged 13 to 18 years, aiming to provide support and interventions to prevent these detrimental outcomes (Nandi & Dash, 2021; Ghara & Roy, 2017; Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2023; Chatterjee, 2023; Mandal, 2021). It provides financial support to the girl students, who are unmarried and continue their higher education from reading class VIII to postgraduate. (Molla & Madhu, 2023; Saha, 2015). The (K1) scholarship initiative offers an annual grant of Rs. 1000 to female students. The Kanyashree Prakalpa (K2) is designed for unmarried girls who reach the age of 18, providing a one-time grant of Rs. 25,000. The Kanyashree Prakalpa (K3) caters to university girls pursuing a postgraduate degree, irrespective of marital status or monthly family income. Under this category, eligible students receive support under the program (www.wbkanyashree.gov.in; Biwas & Deb, 2014; Banerjee & Mukherjee, 2023; Sen, 2016; Nandi & Dash, 2021). This scholarship programme helps all girls' children afford to continue their education, avoid underage marriage, and enhances their health results. In this State, Kanyashree Prakalpa has played a role in empowering girls (www.wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_scheme.php; Biwas & Deb, 2014; Molla & Madhu, 2023; Saha, 2015). Kanyashree Prakalpa has garnered significant attention due to its varied perspectives and goals (Halder, 2018). The programme is regarded as a successful and long-lasting welfare model since it has contributed to a rise in the educational achievement of teenage females in the state. The programme has brought benefits to nearly 16.5 million females (Chatterjee, 2023). Thus, in the present study, researchers investigated the development of women's education through the enrolment of female students in West Bengal pre-and post-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa and providing evidence-based insights into the role of Kanyashree Prakalpas as a catalyst for the development of women's education in West Bengal, India.

2. Review of related studies

Chatterjee (2023) concluded that Kanyashree Prakalpa programme has greatly increased the financial support and development chances available to millions of young girls. It has also set a precedent, encouraging other states to enact similar legislation, which will help to ensure that these girls have a bright future and reduce poverty.

Das, Sikder and Halder (2022) determined that the Kanyashree Prakalpa had a substantial impact in promoting education among adolescent female students, enhancing their social standing, and fostering empowerment.

Mehaboob and Halder (2019) findings reveal that the Kanyashree Prakalpa was put into effect, the situation regarding child marriage has altered, and girls' desire in pursuing higher education has grown. West Bengali girls are fortunate to have Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Samsujjaman and Halder (2018) pointed that introduction of Kanyashree Prakalpa has brought about changes in child marriage. Following the introduction of Kanyashree Prakalpa, interest in postsecondary education has grown. West Bengali teenage girls benefit greatly from the Kanyashree initiative.

Kannar (2018) concluded that this programme significantly improves student learning, delays the marriage of young girls, lowers the death rate of young moms, increases learners' interest in the subject matter, etc. But despite this inspiration, a lot of females still lack access to an education today because of financial constraints. Therefore, in order for more and more girls to benefit from these kinds of programmes, the government needs to give them more priority. But the West Bengal government's attempt is highly commendable.

Sen (2018) pointed out the KP, the state seems to have made a commendable effort to function as a catalyst for social development as opposed to merely a tool. Additionally, it suggests that these teenage girls are becoming more empowered, as they may now at least dare to choose when and how to be married.

Examine recent scholarly papers, reports from educational institutions, and publications for the most recent information. Most of the literature examined Kanyashree Prakalpas's numerous perspectives on women's education. The current study aims to demonstrate the improvements in enrolment rates after the introduction of Kanyashree Prakalpa and to draw a comparison between enrolment pre- and post-implementation, there is a research gap in understanding the aspects of higher education facilitated by Kanyashree Prakalpa. Further exploration and contribution are needed to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Kanyashree Prakalpas in the development of women's education in West Bengal, India.

2.1. Objectives of the study

The following objectives have been followed by the study-

- To study the enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level before the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- To examine the enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- To investigate the enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level before the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- To explore the enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- To compare enrolments of female students at the undergraduate level before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- To compare enrolments of female students at the postgraduate level before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

3. Research methodology

This study is purely qualitative in nature. Qualitative data was collected and Qualitative data analysis was done. Documentary analysis approach has been followed in the study. Documentary analysis is the rigorous process of reviewing and evaluating textual and electronic sources (Bowen, 2009). Qualitative research includes documentary analysis. Qualitative research is best when you want to explore a problem or topic in depth. (Creswell, 2013). For the present study data was collected from AISHE reports, various Books, research papers, doctoral theses, national and international magazines, state reports, newspapers, websites, etc.

4. Data presentation and analysis

4.1. Objective - 1: To study the enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level before the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Table 1 Pre KP-Enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level in West Bengal

Year	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2010-2011	1088743	465857	42.78	
2011-2012	1275152	542656	42.55	-0.23
2012-2013	1422580	619370	43.53	0.98
2013-2014	1519855	672908	44.27	0.74

Source: AISHE reports (2010-2011 to 2013-2014)

Above table 1 indicated the enrolment of female students at undergraduate level before implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa based on All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports Ministry of Education govt. of India. In the academic year 2010-2011, there were 465,857 female students out of a total of 1,088,743 students, representing

42.78% of the total enrolment. The following year, 2011-2012, saw a slight decrease in the percentage of female students to 42.55%, with a negative growth rate of -0.23% compared to the previous year. The academic year 2012-2013 showed an increase in the percentage of female students to 43.53%, with a positive growth rate of 0.98% compared to the previous year. By the academic year 2013-2014, the percentage of female students further increased to 44.27%, with a growth rate of 0.74% compared to the previous year. Overall, the data indicates fluctuations in the percentage of female enrolment over the four-year period, with varying growth rates from year to year.

4.2. Objective - 2: To examine the enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Table 2 Post KP-Enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level in West Bengal

Year	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2014-2015	1593445	729494	45.78	
2015-2016	1607850	751371	46.73	0.95
2016-2017	1693448	812747	47.99	1.26
2017-2018	1666488	824266	49.46	1.47
2018-2019	1725660	874504	50.67	1.21
2019-2020	1790083	924953	51.67	1.00
2020-2021	1793168	929778	51.85	0.18
2021-2022	1783204	925737	51.91	0.06

Source: AISHE reports (2014-2015 to 2021-2022)

Above table 2 indicated the enrolment of female students at undergraduate level after implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa based on All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports Ministry of Education govt. of India. From 2014-2015 to 2021-2022, there has been a gradual increase in the total number of students, with a noticeable shift in the gender distribution. In 2014-2015, the total number of students was 1,593,445, with 45.78% being female. Over the years, the percentage of female students has consistently risen, reaching 51.91% in 2021-2022. The total number of female students has also seen a steady growth from 729,494 in 2014-2015 to 925,737 in 2021-2022. The growth rate, representing the annual percentage change, fluctuates, but there is a general upward trend. Notably, the growth rate was highest between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, with a significant 1.47% increase in the percentage of female students. Overall, the data suggests a positive trend towards a more balanced gender representation in the total student population over the years.

4.3. Objective - 3: To investigate the enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level before the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Table 3 Pre KP-Enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level in West Bengal

Year	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2010-2011	201018	88345	43.94	
2011-2012	152732	80468	52.68	8.74
2012-2013	156878	81307	51.82	-0.86
2013-2014	173571	93471	53.85	2.03

Source: AISHE reports (2010-2011 to 2013-2014)

Above table 3 indicated the enrolment of female students at postgraduate level before implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa based on the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports Ministry of Education govt. of India. In the academic years from 2010-2011 to 2013-2014, there has been a notable progression in the total number of students, with a consistent increase in enrolment. In the initial year, 2010-2011, the total number of students was 201,018, out

of which 43.94% were female, accounting for 88,345 female students. Subsequently, there was a significant rise in total enrolment to 152,732 in 2011-2012, accompanied by a remarkable increase in the percentage of female students to 52.68%, reflecting 80,468 female students. However, in the following academic year, 2012-2013, though the total enrolment continued to grow to 156,878, the percentage of female students witnessed a slight decline to 51.82%, comprising 81,307 female students. Despite this dip, the total number of female students increased. The final year, 2013-2014, demonstrated both an overall growth in enrolment to 173,571 and a positive shift in the percentage of female students, reaching 53.85%, corresponding to 93,471 female students. Notably, the growth rate fluctuated over these years, showing a substantial increase of 8.74% in 2011-2012, followed by a marginal decline of -0.86% in 2012-2013, and a subsequent positive upswing of 2.03% in 2013-2014. Overall, these trends highlight the changing dynamics of gender distribution within the student population, emphasizing the importance of monitoring and analyzing enrolment patterns over consecutive academic years.

4.4. Objective - 4: To explore the enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Table 4 Post KP-Enrolment of female students at the postgraduate level in West Bengal

Year	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2014-2015	188211	101961	54.17	
2015-2016	187171	103027	55.04	0.87
2016-2017	172673	98192	56.86	1.82
2017-2018	187470	91414	48.76	-8.1
2018-2019	161664	94793	58.63	9.87
2019-2020	153025	90360	59.04	0.41
2020-2021	187456	108051	57.64	-1.4
2021-2022	119119	65622	55.08	2.56

Source: AISHE reports (2014-2015 to 2021-2022)

Above table 4 indicated the enrolment of female students at postgraduate level after implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa based on the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports Ministry of Education govt. of India. The data provided presents a snapshot of the total number of individuals in each context over the years from 2014-2015 to 2021-2022, with a specific focus on the total number of females, the percentage of females, and the growth rate. In 2014-2015, the total number was 188,211, with females constituting 54.17% of the population. Over the subsequent years, there were fluctuations in the total number, with varying percentages of females. Notably, in 2017-2018, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of females to 48.76%, indicating a decline of 8.1%. However, in the following years, there was a rebound, and by 2018-2019, the percentage of females reached 58.63%, showing a substantial growth rate of 9.87%. The trend continued with minor fluctuations in the ensuing years. In 2021-2022, the total number dropped to 119,119, with females comprising 55.08%, indicating a growth rate of 2.56%. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the demographic shifts and gender composition over the specified time frame.

4.5. Objective - 5: To compare enrolments of female students at the undergraduate level before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Below table indicated the enrolment of female students at the undergraduate level before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa based on the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reports Ministry of Education govt. of India. The data provided presents a snapshot of the total number of individuals in a given context over the years from 2014-2015 to 2021-2022, with a specific focus on the total number of females, the percentage of females, and the growth rate. In 2014-2015, the total number was 188,211, with females constituting 54.17% of the population. Over the subsequent years, there were fluctuations in the total number, with varying percentages of females. Notably, in 2017-2018, there was a significant decrease in the percentage of females to 48.76%, indicating a decline of 8.1%. However, in the following years, there was a rebound, and by 2018-2019, the percentage of females reached 58.63%, showing a substantial growth rate of 9.87%. The trend continued with minor fluctuations in the ensuing years. In 2021-2022, the total number dropped to 119,119, with females comprising 55.08%, indicating a growth rate of 2.56%. This

comprehensive analysis provides insights into the demographic shifts and gender composition over the specified time frame.

Table 5 Comparison between enrolments of female students at the undergraduate level pre-and post-implementation of KP

Year	Enrolment at Undergraduate level pre-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa				Enrolment at Undergraduate level post implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa			
	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2010-2011	201018	88345	42.78					
2011-2012	152732	80468	42.55	-0.23				
2012-2013	156878	81307	43.53	0.98				
2013-2014	173571	93471	44.27	0.74				
2014-2015					1593445	729494	45.78	
2015-2016					1607850	751371	46.73	0.95
2016-2017					1693448	812747	47.99	1.26
2017-2018					1666488	824266	49.46	1.47
2018-2019					1725660	874504	50.67	1.21
2019-2020					1790083	924953	51.67	1.00
2020-2021					1793168	929778	51.85	0.18
2021-2022					1783204	925737	51.91	0.06

Source: AISHE reports (2010-2011 to 2021-2022)

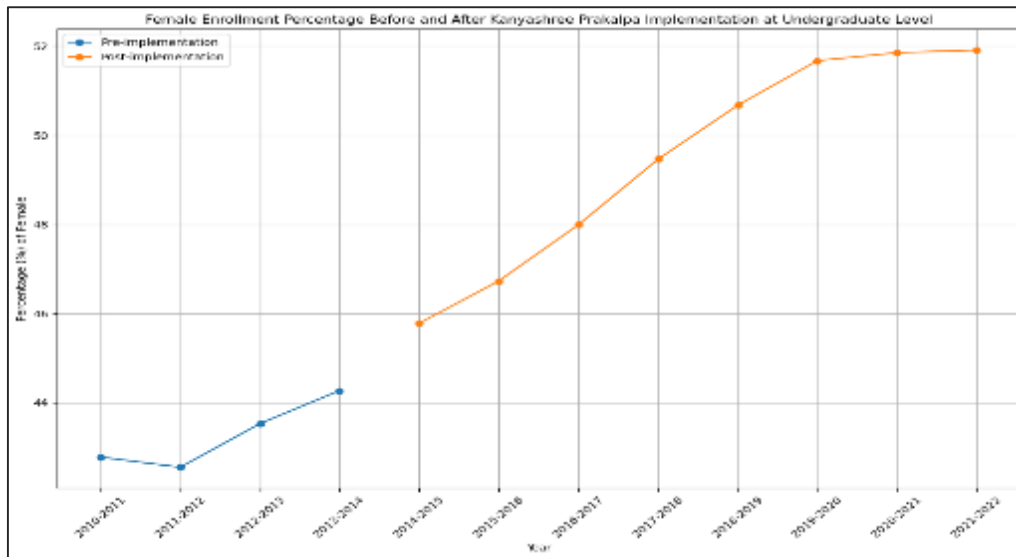


Figure 5 Comparison between enrolments of female students at the undergraduate level pre- and post-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

4.6. Objective - 6: To compare enrolments of female students at the postgraduate level before and after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Table 6 Comparison between enrolments of female students at the postgraduate level pre-and post-implementation of KP.

Year	Enrolment at Postgraduate level pre-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa				Enrolment at Postgraduate level post-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa			
	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate	Total number of (Male & Female)	Total number of Female	Percentage (%) of Female	Growth Rate
2010-2011	201018	88345	43.94					
2011-2012	152732	80468	52.68	8.74				
2012-2013	156878	81307	51.82	-0.86				
2013-2014	173571	93471	53.85	2.03				
2014-2015					188211	101961	54.17	
2015-2016					187171	103027	55.04	0.87
2016-2017					172673	98192	56.86	1.82
2017-2018					187470	91414	48.76	-8.1
2018-2019					161664	94793	58.63	9.87

2019-2020				153025	90360	59.04	0.41
2020-2021				187456	108051	57.64	-1.4
2021-2022				119119	65622	55.08	2.56

Source: AISHE reports (2010-2011 to 2021-2022)

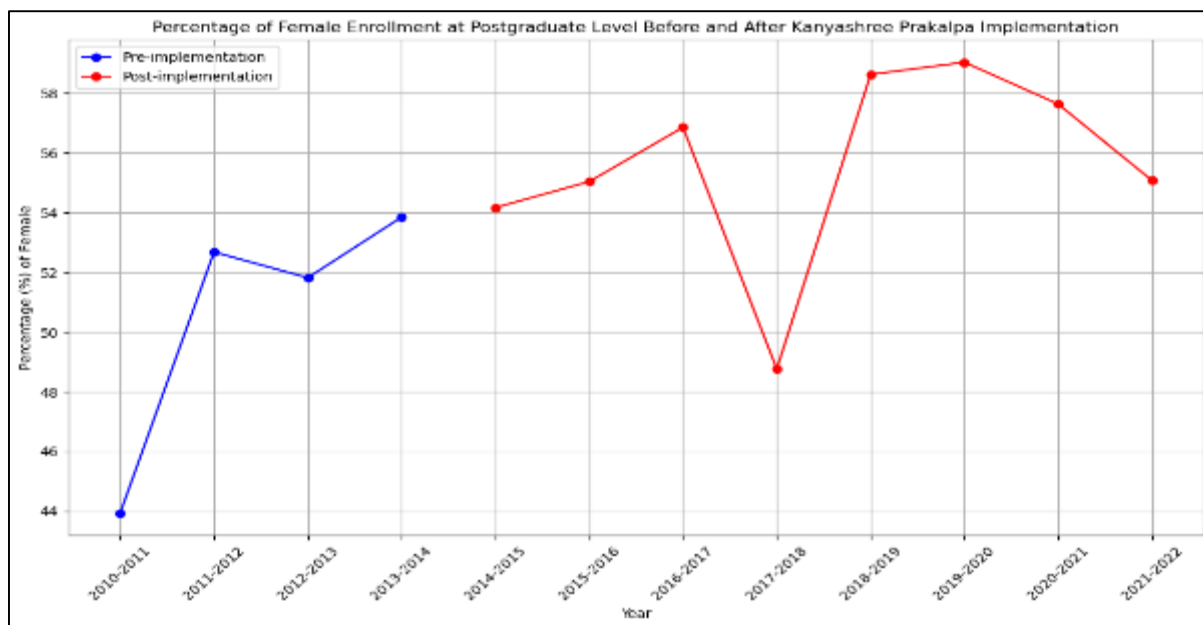


Figure 6 Comparison between enrolments of female students at the postgraduate level pre-and post-implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa.

5. Results of the study

It was found that clear upward trend in the percentage of female enrolment at the undergraduate level after the implementation of the Kanyashree Prakalpa. Before the implementation, the percentage of female enrolment hovered around 42.78% to 44.27% between 2010-2011 and 2013-2014. After the initiative was implemented, this percentage increased steadily from 45.78% in 2014-2015 to 51.91% in 2021-2022.

It has been revealed that after the implementation of the Kanyashree Prakalpa, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of female enrolment at the postgraduate level. Before the implementation, the percentage of female enrolment was fluctuating around 43.94% to 53.85%. After the implementation, the percentage increased, reaching as high as 59.04% in 2019-2020.

6. Discussion

The observed clear upward trend in the percentage of female enrolment at the undergraduate level following the implementation of the Kanyashree Prakalpa presents compelling evidence of the program's positive impact on gender inclusivity in education. The data indicates a significant shift from a relatively stable enrolment rate of around 42.78% to 44.27% before 2014. The subsequent years, post-implementation, reveal a consistent and noteworthy increase, with the percentage of female enrolment reaching 51.91% by 2021-2022. This trend suggests that the Kanyashree Prakalpa has effectively contributed to breaking down barriers that may have hindered female participation in higher education. The initiative's success in fostering a more gender-inclusive educational environment is evident, emphasizing its role in empowering and encouraging female students to pursue undergraduate studies. However, further research may be warranted to explore the specific mechanisms and factors that have driven this positive shift and to assess the long-term sustainability and broader societal implications of such initiatives.

The observed increase in the percentage of female enrolment at the postgraduate level following the implementation of the Kanyashree Prakalpa is a significant and positive finding with several noteworthy implications. The pre-implementation period, marked by fluctuating female enrolment percentages between 43.94% and 53.85%, indicates an existing scenario where women's participation in postgraduate education faced challenges or exhibited inconsistency. The post-implementation surge, particularly the peak at 59.04% in the academic year 2019-2020, suggests a tangible impact of the Kanyashree Prakalpa on promoting and facilitating higher education for women.

The findings highlight the success of Kanyashree Prakalpas in promoting enrolment, retention, and completion of higher education among girls and young women. Kanyashree Prakalpa played a significant role in spreading education among adolescent girls students, improving their status, and empowering them (Das, Sikder & Halder, 2022; Kannar, 2018). KP has significantly improved development opportunities and financial support for millions of young girls (Chatterjee, 2023). Interest in higher education has increased after the implementation of Kanyashree Prakalpa. Kanyashree scheme boon for adolescent girls of West Bengal (Samsujjaman & Halder, 2018; Mehaboob & Halder, 2019). Kanyashree Prakalpa is a blessing for the girls in West Bengal (Mehaboob & Halder, 2019; Halder, 2018).

This finding aligns with the program's objectives, emphasizing the empowerment and education of young girls. The notable increase may be attributed to the various components of the Kanyashree Prakalpa, such as cash transfer schemes, incentives for education continuation, and awareness campaigns, which collectively contribute to breaking down barriers that may have hindered female enrolment in undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

While the increase in enrolment percentages is promising, ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure sustained positive trends and address any emerging challenges. Moreover, comparing these findings with other regions or educational interventions can contribute to a broader understanding of effective strategies for enhancing female participation in undergraduate and postgraduate education. Overall, the observed rise in female enrolment is a positive indication of Kanyashree Prakalpa's potential to contribute to gender equity in higher education, warranting continued attention and investigation.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Kanyashree Prakalpa's endeavor to support women's educational progress in the West Bengal state. KP addressed several obstacles that prevent women from pursuing higher education, and it has demonstrated its ability to be a catalyst for positive change. By giving women, the knowledge and skills required for both personal and societal growth, the project has not only improved the educational options available to them but also helped break the cycle of poverty. One inspiring example of women's empowerment and education is Kanyashree Prakalpa.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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