

Singapore Management University

## Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

---

Research Collection School of Social Sciences

School of Social Sciences

---

9-2020

### Gender and parliamentary representation in India: The case of violence against women and children

Sadhvi KALRA

Devin K. JOSHI

Singapore Management University, [devinjoshi@smu.edu.sg](mailto:devinjoshi@smu.edu.sg)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss\\_research](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research)



Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

#### Citation

KALRA, Sadhvi, & JOSHI, Devin K..(2020). Gender and parliamentary representation in India: The case of violence against women and children. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 82, 1-10.

Available at: [https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss\\_research/3592](https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/soss_research/3592)

This Journal Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collection School of Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email [cherylids@smu.edu.sg](mailto:cherylids@smu.edu.sg).

# **Gender and parliamentary representation in India: The case of violence against women and children**

Sadhvi Kalra, CARE, USA

Devin K. Joshi, Singapore Management University, Singapore

Published in *Women's Studies International Forum*, 82, September–October 2020, 102402

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2020.102402>

## **Abstract**

To better understand how gender impacts parliamentary representation, we analysed representative claims made by parliamentarians in India, the world's largest democracy. Applying critical frame analysis to plenary debates in the Indian Rajya Sabha, we examined four parliamentary bills addressing violence against women and children under four successive governments between 1999 and 2019. Testing six hypotheses concerning who represents and how, our study found women legislators more active in speaking on behalf of women and children than male legislators. Women parliamentarians focused more on rehabilitating victims and expanding the scope of rights and rights-holders. Women were also more vocal in contesting harassment in the workplace than condemning violence against children. Meanwhile leftist party representatives expressed greater condemnation of violence than most other legislators. Our findings reveal the need to modify parliamentary rules, have more women as political party leaders and parliamentarians, and to adopt a more proportional electoral system.

**Keywords:** Children, Gender, India, Parliament, Representation, Violence, Women

Violence against women and children in India is a problem of mesmerizing proportions and unambiguously symptomatic of gendered power-relations fuelled by deeply entrenched ideas and practices of patriarchy. Such violence occurs not only within society, but also by agents of the state including its policemen, politicians, and soldiers. As a recent study notes, the “number of reported rapes a day has increased nearly 700%” between 1971 and 2014 and “women from the working class, a minority, or ‘lower’ caste Dalit groups are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence” (Gangoli & Rew, 2018: 110–111). Though various laws are in place to prevent such violence, many are “flouted with impunity” (Hasan, 2010: 942) and “the patriarchal basis of the ‘Indian family’, where the women are understood to be the sexual property of the husband, goes fundamentally unchallenged” (Gangoli & Rew, 2018:124). Increasing women's presence in parliament therefore potentially offers an opportunity for women's voices to impact policy-making and to address the root causes of this violence, but some fear that many women in politics, especially those associated with the current right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government are “a compelling example of the instrumentalisation of women to accomplish the political goals of the Hindu right” as opposed to being women's rights advocates dedicated to solving problems affecting women (Hasan, 2010: 939).

Although India elected its first woman prime minister as early as 1966, reported cases of violence against women this past decade have been astonishing. According to India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 337,922 cases of crimes against women were reported in 2014 compared to 228,650 in 2011. Although the number has decreased slightly since 2014, the rate of crimes against women (per

100,000) has remained high and growing at 53.9 in 2015 and 56.3 in 2016.<sup>1</sup> With respect to children, 38,172 cases of crimes against children were reported in 2012 with more than double that amount (94,172) reported in 2015. With horrific violence so prevalent, it is tempting to believe that merely increasing the representation of women in parliament cannot guarantee the protection of women and children. But is such pessimism warranted?

This study addresses these issues by exploring how gender has impacted parliamentary representation in the form of plenary speeches given in the upper house of the Indian parliament on legislations directly related to violence against women and children. While previous studies on gendered parliamentary debate participation have heavily focused on Western countries, researchers are starting to analyse more countries in the Global South, especially those with gender quotas and a sizable proportion of women legislators. Here, we draw insights from studies conducted in places like Uganda (Clayton, Josefsson, & Wang, 2017; Wang, 2014) and Argentina (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Piscopo, 2011) to see whether similar dynamics might hold in the parliament of India which contrastingly features no gender quotas and relatively few women representatives.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. Gender and parliamentary representation**

Following the insights of Pitkin (1967), parliamentary representation is often divided into the categories of ‘formal’, ‘descriptive’, ‘substantive’, and ‘symbolic.’ While ‘formal’ representation pertains to general rules governing an institution, ‘descriptive’ representation of women concerns their actual numbers and proportions as parliament members. According to Phillips’ (1995) ‘politics of presence’ argument, this is important because if women are absent from political arenas like parliaments, they may have little effect on decision-making processes and outcomes. Supporting the belief that ‘descriptive’ representation is linked to women’s ‘substantive’ representation (i.e. obtaining more favourable policy outcomes), studies have found that having more women in leadership positions can lead to more gender sensitive policies (e.g. Beckwith, 2007; Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2009). The “great woman” theory of leadership further asserts that women leaders are more “collaborative, cooperative, supportive, understanding, gentle, emotional, and vulnerable” than men (Pittinsky, Bacon, & Welle, 2007: 96; see also Carli & Eagly, 2007; Joshi & Goehrung, 2018). Empirical research also finds women in parliament more frequently advance issues pertaining to women than their male counterparts (e.g. Cowell-Meyers & Langbein, 2009; Singh & Pundir, 2002; Taylor-Robinson & Heath, 2003). For instance, a study by Swers (2002) of the US Congress found Republican Congresswomen speak up for women’s issues even if they are in small numbers. Thus, being small in number does not necessarily stop women from raising their concerns in parliament since some step forward as ‘critical actors’ to more actively represent women despite being in the minority (Childs & Krook, 2009).

However, even if one assumes that women can and do represent women and women’s issues in a male-dominated legislature, which policies, decisions, and actions do they focus on? In this respect, scholars have warned against taking an a priori approach to understanding women’s issues (Celis, 2013; Celis, Childs, Kantola, & Krook, 2008). Rather, women’s issues need to be understood as evolving and acquiring meaning through political debates and deliberations (Reingold & Swers, 2011).

Relatedly, the study of ‘intersectionality’ draws attention to the fact that individuals’ experiences and perceptions, the knowledge they produce, and claims they make, are not a function of gender alone, but arise at the intersection of multiple identities and attributes including gender, race, class, caste, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, citizenship, and religion (e.g. Collins & Chepp, 2013; Dhamoon, 2011; Hancock, 2014). This reminds us that a woman in parliament may, for example, be simultaneously

---

<sup>1</sup> NCRB statistics were obtained from: <http://ncrb.gov.in/> (Accessed on June 10, 2019).

privileged on the basis of her race and class (or caste) while disadvantaged due to her gender or age. In other words, since women are a heterogeneous group, it would be insufficient for women of only one type to be in a legislature for effective advocacy of women's interests (Celis, 2013; Joshi & Och, 2014).

These points lead us to interpret claims made by parliamentary representatives in public deliberations as reflecting both 'symbolic' and 'substantive' forms of representation because they reaffirm or contest to varying degrees the policy frames by which public options are evaluated (Celis, Childs, Kantola, & Krook, 2014; Lombardo & Meier, 2014; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). Since women are a heterogeneous group, studies of 'women's issues' need to acknowledge diversity in how these issues are understood and assessing such claims can help to uncover gendered ways of perceiving problems and proposing solutions (Celis, 2013). For instance, a study of UK parliamentary debates over abortion revealed how women initially embraced more substantive issues, while men focused more on procedural concerns (Bicquelet, Weale, & Bara, 2012).

The case of India is somewhat paradoxical as several women have become top ministers (including former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi), but the overall percentage of women in parliament has remained low with many hailing from a direct political lineage or with relatives already in politics (Ahmed, 2020; Basu, 2016; Chopra, 1993; Dhal & Chakrabarty, 2018; Kishwar, 1999; Rai, 1995; Rai, 2012; Rai & Spary, 2019). Moreover, the caste structure and dynastic politics of India renders the intersectionality of its political representatives especially important (Basu, 2016; Jayal, 2006). For instance, a study of women legislators in Uttar Pradesh (India's most populated state) concluded that even though a majority were university-educated, only a minority belonged to scheduled castes (Dalits) or other backwards castes (OBCs) (Singh & Pundir, 2002). Given such disparities, debates over gender quotas in India have questioned whether increasing women's numerical representation will actually benefit women's substantive representation. On the critics' side, popular assertions that women members of parliament (WMPs) are passive and docile are usually based on purely anecdotal evidence, but a systematic three-decade analysis found that women parliamentarians were indeed "substantially less" active in the parliament's 'question hour' (Jacob, 2014: 238).<sup>2</sup> Yet, other research suggests that change is already under way. For instance, the majority of WMPs interviewed by Shirin Rai in 1994 felt that quotas would lead to men devaluing women candidates and doubting their capabilities, but after 2004, most WMPs she interviewed were in favour of quotas (Rai, 2012). This change appears to reflect an increased perception that having more women in political decision-making facilitates more gender-aware governance.

## **1.2. Violence against women and children in India**

What constitutes 'women's issues' differs across women and also changes over time including how violence against women and children is conceptualized. Immediately after the struggle for Indian independence, many feminist activists in India had their roots in the left-leaning parties and there were conflicts over whether to prioritize issues of working class women vis-à-vis middle class women in contesting violence against them (Gangoli, 2007; Kumar, 1993). Over time, feminist movements increasingly converged on the view that laws are a means to 'protect' women from rampant violence (Gangoli, 2007; Kumar, 1993; Menon, 2004). However, systematic subordination of women via oppressive state hierarchies has demonstrated several limitations to this approach (Gangoli, 2007). Although numerous laws 'protecting women' were passed in the 1980s, critics argue they have ultimately strengthened the state and penalised women (Agnes, 1992).<sup>3</sup> In response, feminist movement

---

<sup>2</sup> As Rai and Spary (2019: 168, 189) note, "pessimistic public discourse around inclusion of women in politics often depicts women MPs as *gungi gudiya* (dumb dolls) who cannot or do not speak in Parliament" when actually "women MPs have been prominent participants in debates on explicitly women-related legislation."

<sup>3</sup> These laws include the Amendment to Rape Laws, 1983, Dowry Prohibition Amendment Act, 1986; Amendments to the Criminal Laws (sections 498A and 304B of the IPC addressing Domestic Violence),

actors have made diligent efforts supported by positive international developments to address underlying sources of gender inequality, but protection to women and girls from violence is still provided by the state in a piece-meal fashion (Agnes, 2019; Kumar, 1993).<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, changes in public discourse have facilitated more complex understandings of such violence. Feminist actors have been negotiating with the Indian state since the 1970s on how to define and act on women's issues and they have made some progress in campaigns against 'rape' and dowry. A simplistic understanding of 'rape' as involving only 'penetration' has thus evolved into greater attention towards 'sexual offences' centred on the experience of the survivor, whether child or adult and regardless of their sex. The passing of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act in 2012 presents an example of this more robust understanding. Similarly, domestic violence and in its earlier form, 'wife-beating', arose as an issue in the 1970s but it was primarily confined to dowry related physical violence as encapsulated in the Criminal Law (2nd Amendment) Act, 1983 (Abeyratne & Jain, 2012; Agnes, 1992; Kumar, 1993). Recognizing this shortcoming, a bill specifically dedicated to domestic violence was drafted in 1993 and finally became law in 2005 though it still faced some resistance from male MPs, unwilling to forgo romanticised notions of the 'Hindu family' (Gangoli, 2007).

Attention to 'sexual offences' also gained further momentum in response to horrific cases of women getting 'raped' at work as this form of violence reiterates a heightened power imbalance between employer and employee that places women in a doubly marginalized position.<sup>5</sup> When the infamous December 2012 gang rape of a 23 year old physiotherapy student in Delhi led to a massive public outcry, it finally brought violence of a 'sexual nature' against women to the forefront of the country's collective consciousness (Menon, 2019). This made the country's legislative and justice system hastily respond to growing unrest by passing the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 though the latter was heavily condemned by child rights' activists as it allowed children between the ages of 16 and 18 years to be tried as adults.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3. Hypotheses

As discussed above, throughout India's chequered history of preventing and protecting women and children against various forms of violence, the definition of a 'child' and the 'sexual agency of women and children' have been points of contention among feminist, legal, and political actors. However parliamentary representation on these issues still remains fairly ambiguous. Thus, drawing from the literature on gender and parliamentary representation, we have identified the following six hypotheses to test in our study:

When it comes to framing the debate (i.e. how representation occurs), our first hypothesis (H1) is that women as victims of violence will focus more on rehabilitating victims than men who might focus more on punishing perpetrators. Relatedly, our second hypothesis (H2) is that women as traditionally marginalized citizens will advocate greater 'inclusion' than men when it comes to the scope of 'rights' and 'rights holders.' Our third hypothesis (H3) is that women legislators are more likely than men to diagnose the prevalence of violence against women and children as originating from structural factors

---

Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Especially important were the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

<sup>5</sup> The most infamous of these cases was Bhanwari Devi v. State of Rajasthan in 1992 concerning four "higher caste" men who gang raped a "lower caste" female social worker representing the State of Rajasthan as she was trying to stop a child marriage in the village.

<sup>6</sup> Arguably, this made an already weak juvenile justice framework more punitive rather than assimilative and it was a loss for child rights activists who had struggled to make the juvenile justice system more child friendly and adopt a victim centred approach (Kumar, 2019).

(such as patriarchy) as opposed to individual-level factors (such as personality). These three hypotheses derive from studies cited above which see women leaders as typically being more collective, sympathetic and positive-sum in orientation than male leaders who may be less inclined to challenge traditional notions of rights, justice, and gender norms.

Turning to the question of who represents, our fourth hypothesis (H4) drawing from recent work by Clayton et al. (2017) is that women legislators will be more active in speaking on behalf of women and children than men. Based on ideological positions discussed in Piscopo (2011), our fifth hypothesis (H5) is that leftist party representatives might express greater condemnation of violence against women and children than legislators from other parties. Lastly, drawing from intersectionality research, our sixth and final hypothesis (H6) is that women legislators will be more vocal in opposition to violence that impacts middle and upper strata women than violence impacting lower strata women.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Methodology

Examining plenary debates over bills addressing violence against women and children, our study focuses on the upper house of the bicameral Indian Parliament which consists of a 245-member upper chamber, the ‘Council of States’ or Rajya Sabha (RS), and a 545-member lower chamber, the ‘House of the People’ or Lok Sabha (LS). An important difference between these chambers is that most RS members (233) are elected via proportional (PR) representation by state legislatures through a single transferable vote system with twelve additional members nominated by the president from “various fields of activity, notably the arts, literature and culture” (Arora, 2014: 210). RS members hold staggered terms lasting six years, each with one third up for election every two years (Shankar & Rodrigues, 2011). By contrast, most LS representatives (543) are popularly elected via general elections for five-year terms from single-member first-pass-the-post districts. In the LS, 22.5% of the seats are also reserved for scheduled caste (15%) and scheduled tribe (7.5%) representatives.

As in other countries, parliamentary representation in India is shaped by its particular history and institutions. Comparatively speaking, the Indian parliament is a “reactive legislature” (Mezey, 1979; Rubinoff, 2013) where members of parliament (MP) have little influence in initiating legislation.<sup>8</sup> In India, most legislation is initiated by the executive branch, most government bills pass without amendments, many bills are not debated, and how MPs vote on a bill is usually not recorded (e.g. Madhavan, 2017; Singh, 2015; Wallack, 2008).<sup>9</sup> Party discipline is also strong given anti-defection laws requiring MPs to vote the party line or be expelled from parliament and this strengthens the power of political party bosses while inhibiting MPs from championing independent viewpoints and their own constituent's interests (Dhal & Chakrabarty, 2018; Rai & Spary, 2019). Despite these limitations, however, the Indian parliament is generally supported by its political elites as an institution for public debate, critique, interpellations, and sometimes modification of executive proposals (Arora, 2014; Madhavan, 2017).

Bicameralism also plays an important role. As Madhavan (2017: 68) explains,

---

<sup>7</sup> In the Argentine Congress, Piscopo (2011: 467) found “that elite politicians focused on the needs of non-elite” women, but we suspect this will occur less often within the more socially fragmented context of India.

<sup>8</sup> As Mezey (1979: 4) explains, aside from law-making, major functions of parliaments are to “represent the views of the people to...the executive and the bureaucracy,” to “educate and inform the public on major political issues,” and to “oversee the activities of the bureaucracy.” He identifies five types of legislatures based on their power and degree of support by elites: active (strong and supported), reactive (modest and supported), minimal (little and supported), vulnerable (strong but less supported), and marginal (modest and less supported).

<sup>9</sup> No private member bills have passed the Indian Parliament since 1971. The Indian Parliament also features relatively weak committees and no budget to hire research staff (Madhavan, 2017).

The executive government, headed by the prime minister, is formed by the person who enjoys the confidence of the majority of MPs in Lok Sabha; the Rajya Sabha has no say in this matter. Similarly, money bills need the support of the majority of members voting in the Lok Sabha, while the Rajya Sabha has only a recommendatory role. The two houses have equal powers on other legislative business. Every ordinary bill has to be passed by a majority of each house. Any amendment made by one house needs the concurrence of the other.

Thus, while the LS is more powerful, the RS plays an important function in balancing against the popularly elected chamber. Since the coalitional majority in the RS may differ from the LS, it requires the government to negotiate with the RS to pass laws (Singh, 2015). The RS also has no reserved seats, a higher minimum age (30) than the LS (25), and its members tend to be well-educated (Chopra, 1993). By contrast, the LS has broadened its composition over time away from dominance by lawyers and forward castes to more low and intermediate cases members and agriculturists though a majority are now crorepatris (those with at least ten million rupees in assets) and a third have criminal cases pending against them in the courts (Jayal, 2006; Madhavan, 2017; Rubinoff, 2013; Singh, 2015).

Our study analyses parliamentary debates conducted in the Hindi<sup>10</sup> and English languages within the multi-lingual RS. We chose to study the RS for five reasons. Firstly, it shares nearly equal powers with the LS to introduce, debate, and pass bills, making it a good location for analysing women's representation since any (non-financial) bill rejected by the RS will not become law. Secondly, from 1952 to 2018 the share of women members has been 50% higher in the RS (9%) than the LS (6%) (Dhal & Chakrabarty, 2018: 75). Thirdly, transcriptions of all RS debates are publicly available through its parliament website in contrast to more limited availability of LS transcripts. Fourthly, the RS has been vastly under-studied compared to the LS in the context of Indian women's parliamentary representation. Fifthly, RS debates are generally seen to be of higher quality compared to those in the LS as the RS was originally intended to serve as an “impartial chamber of revision...unswayed by considerations of electoral outcome” with “a sobering effect” on legislation that holds “dignified debates on important issues” and can “delay legislation which might be the outcome of the passions of the moment” (Shankar & Rodrigues, 2011: 295).<sup>11</sup> The RS also spends more of its time in debates than the LS (Wallack, 2008: 94) and its debates are “less restrictive time-wise on account of its smaller size” (Singh, 2015: 356).<sup>12</sup>

Taking a qualitative approach, we selected four parliamentary bills debated in the RS between 1999 and 2019 which originated from the Government of India, dealt specifically with violence against women or children (two each), and eventually became law. During this time, a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition government led by the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power (1999–2004) followed by two terms of a center-left United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition government headed by the Indian National Congress (INC) party from 2004 to 2014 followed by a BJP-led government (2014–2019) which was re-elected again in 2019. Thus, our study covers a period when the BJP and INC alternated for ten years each in government and as leading (i.e. largest) opposition party.

Our analysis draws on the methodology of “critical frame analysis” (Meier, 2008; Roggeband & Verloo, 2007; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). As Entman (1993: 55) notes, “frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions.” Thus, for each debate, we examined claims made by legislators in parliamentary speeches which we

---

<sup>10</sup> Hindi translations were conducted by the authors.

<sup>11</sup> In recent years, the LS has been mired by “unseemly brawls and violent altercations” plus “frequent disruptions due to procedural wrangles, walkouts and adjournments” (Arora, 2014: 213) resulting in few bills passed, fewer sitting days, high absenteeism, frequent quorum violations, and insufficient time to hold proper debates due to time wasted by disruptions (Madhavan, 2017; Singh, 2015; Wallack, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Shankar and Rodrigues (2011: 318) find “the quality of debates in the Rajya Sabha is of a higher order, and while there are disruptions and interruptions in the functioning of the House, they are much less in comparison to the Lok Sabha.”

classified into broad overarching frame categories to enable comparisons across bills and legislators.<sup>13</sup> We chose this inductive approach because frame selection, resonance, and credibility always apply to specific contexts (Benford & Snow, 2000). By not closing “the possibilities of coding ahead of the analysis” it enabled us to “capture unexpected and inconsistent elements of frames that could be left out from the use of a pre-established coding template” (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007: 38). We also took note of how frequently frames appeared and tabulated word counts of those who spoke up to identify “which voices (perspectives and experiences) are more regularly included or excluded from the possibility of framing policy problems and solutions” (ibid: 34).<sup>14</sup> Lastly, we noted when people were not allowed to speak to “give visibility to processes of exclusions that exist in the formulation of policy discourses” (ibid: 38) and we included men recognizing that many actors make claims “on behalf of ‘women’” (Celis et al., 2014: 152).

To identify and code frames we conducted a thorough reading of every debate. In our first reading, the central argument of the debate was chosen as the first frame. This coding was usually based directly on the specific amendment being introduced to an already existing act. The bill was read thoroughly to first identify the number of parliamentarians who addressed that frame directly. For example, for the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Bill, 2015; the ‘age of a juvenile’ was the central topic of discussion among a majority of speakers. Reading through the debate, parliamentarians who spoke ‘directly’ on this frame were noted. Many times, to support or reject the central argument, the central frame was also conceptualized through other frames which were noted in the second round of reading through the same debate. Other frames likewise emerged as the authors went through multiple readings of the debate. In the case of overlapping arguments, a parliamentarian may have spoken on the ‘age of a juvenile’ but also linked this to the need for rehabilitation. Hence, that parliamentarian was coded as addressing two frames, ‘age of a juvenile’ and ‘rehabilitation’. Once the authors felt that the frames had been completely exhausted in a debate, coding was considered completed. Following Verloo and Lombardo (2007: 40), to improve the validity and reliability of our coding process, we also insured that “at least two people” (i.e. both of the study's authors) reviewed and approved coding decisions.

Lastly, in order to take MP intersectionality into account, we took note of debate participants' background characteristics including their gender, political party, state, years of RS experience, and educational qualifications (as obtained from the parliament website) to see which of these characteristics might influence who speaks up and what ‘representative claims’ or frames they used when addressing the welfare, protection, and maintenance of women and children. By combining these methods, our study of women's representation in the RS during the twenty-first century offers something new compared to previous analyses of Indian women's parliamentary representation which have focused primarily on the Lok Sabha (e.g. Ahmed, 2020; Basu, 2016; Dhal & Chakrabarty, 2018; Jacob, 2014; Jensenius, 2016; Rai, 2012; Rai & Spary, 2019; Spary, 2007; Spary, 2014) or the past century (e.g. Chopra, 1993; Kumari & Dubey, 1994; Lenneberg, 1994; Mishra, 2000; Rai, 1995; Singh, 2003).

### 3. Analysis

Our analysis of RS plenary debates focuses on four bills addressing violence against children and women looking both at how women and children were represented and who were representing them.

---

<sup>13</sup> In speeches where representatives articulated multiple frames, each individual frame was classified separately.

<sup>14</sup> As Rai and Spary (2019: 168) point out, “one of the most important aspects of an MP's role is to deliberate. Debates in Parliament are also highly performative moments where reputations are made and unmade. Participating in debates is arguably the most visible work women MPs perform in parliament.”



### 3.1. Juvenile justice

The first bill pertaining to children is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJA) which was debated by the RS in 2000, 2006, 2011 and 2015 over amendments regarding the scope of the bill, its implementation, and compliance with children's rights enunciated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The JJA provides a clear illustration of contested claims-making in part because it has a criminal justice component and a focus on rehabilitation and well-being. During debates on the act, men frequently mentioned the goal of securing the rights of the child but mostly spoke on frames of 'criminal justice' and 'practical and procedural' aspects of the act. By contrast, women focused more on assuring successful long-term 'rehabilitation' of the child and a 'child-friendly' approach in implementation. WMPs presented options like 'adoption', 'foster care' and 'sponsorship' as different alternatives for ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for a child.

In the year 2000, when an amendment to include 'adoption' as a rehabilitation measure was introduced, male members of parliament (MMPs) treated it more as a legal and procedural intervention which temporarily derailed the discussion from ensuring a loving and caring household for the child. This distraction largely stemmed from opposition MMPs who brought up the Personal Law which recognizes differences in religion as reflected in the quote below.

One is that the bar that is there in this Act, applicable to Hindus, is being taken away, and an enabling provision with a contrary scope is being introduced by the proposed legislation (MMP, December 20th, 2000).

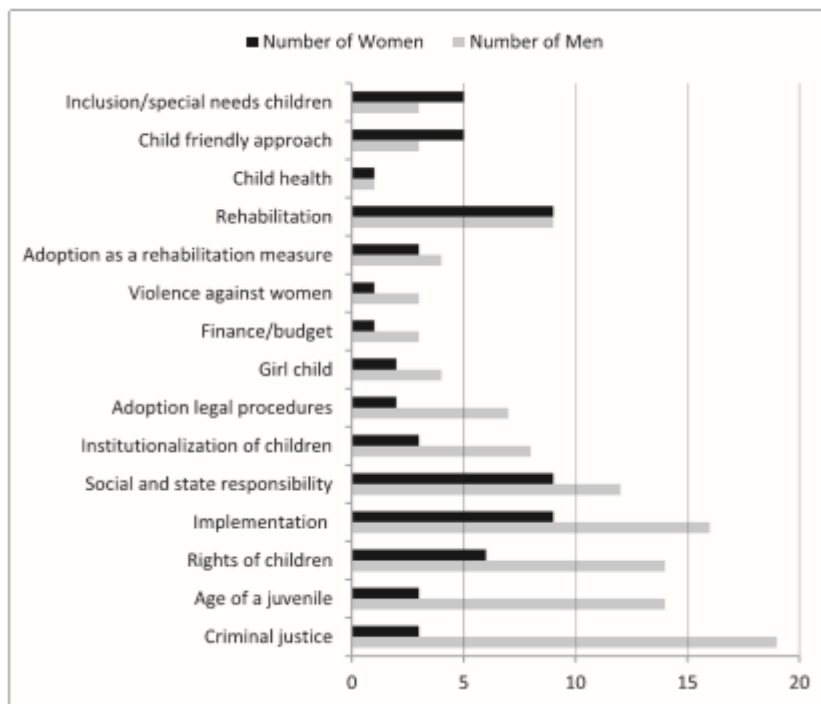
In reaction to this move, and in support of the 'real purpose' of the proposed amendment, two men supporting the ruling party redirected the debate from 'religion of the adopting parent' to 'welfare of the adopted child'.

For the first time, it is an enlightened piece of secular legislation, and I am surprised that you want to revert back to the Middle Ages and subject it to the personal law.... Now the purpose of adoption under this Act is totally, totally different. It has nothing to do with religion. It has nothing to do with the 'pindas'. It has nothing to do with any spiritual rehabilitation of your ancestors. It has something to do with the physical, economic and social rehabilitation of the unfortunate child (Senior MMP, December 20th, 2000).

On the whole, men participating in the JJA debate tended to emphasize legality, whereas women's claims focused more on ensuring child friendly practices, including all types of children, and recognizing special needs as shown in Fig. 1 and the quote below.

... जब भी हम मीडिया में एक लड़का या लड़की के बारे में सूचित करते हैं ... .. ऐसी स्थिति में उनके नाम का उल्लेख नहीं किया जाना चाहिए और न ही उनकी तस्वीर को दिखाया जाना चाहिए [Whenever we inform about a boy or girl in the media...in such situations their name should not be mentioned, neither should their picture be shown] (WMP, August 8th, 2006).

Fig. 1. Frequency of frames articulated in JJA debates (2000–2015) by MP gender.



Reflecting this difference, during debates on the JJA from 2000 to 2015, we found a ‘child friendly approach’ advocated by 5 women and 3 men. This amounted to 18.5% of all women and 1.3% of all men in the RS. By contrast, legal and procedural claims like deciding the age of a juvenile were brought up by far more men (14) than women (3). The following two quotes illustrate this juxtaposition.

स्थिति वह नहीं है जो 20–25 साल पहले हुई थी। बल्कि, इन दिनों, 16–18 वर्षीय बच्चे हैं, जो ऐसे गंभीर अपराध करते हैं, जो कि 20–30 साल की उम्र के लोग भी नहीं करते हैं, आज उनका use किया जा रहा है। [The situation is not what it was 20–25 years ago. Rather, these days, 16–18 years old kids are there, who commit such serious crimes, which, even those aged 20–30 years old do not commit, today those are being used.] (MMP, August 8th, 2006).

There should be continuous follow up, at least, for two to three years because the agency should have some sort of liaison with the adoptive parents of the children and go on interacting with them so that the child is properly placed in that home (WMP, August 8th, 2006).

Debates on this bill also took place in response to the infamous 2012 Delhi Rape case which prompted mass protests and led to a public outcry in 2015 when one of those accused of committing this heinous crime was to be set free as he turned 18 years of age (as per the JJA 2012). This led the Minister of the Department of Women and Child Development (a WMP) to introduce an amendment to reduce the age of a juvenile from 18 to 16 years old. While an equal number of women and men spoke in this debate on the issue of rehabilitation of the accused, a much higher proportion of WMPs in the RS (9 out of a total of 27) spoke about the act through the frame of rehabilitating the child, compared to 9 out of 218 MMPs. The timing of introducing amendments to this bill in 2015 and the content of the debate also potentially suggest superficiality by the ruling party at the time (BJP) in addressing the issue of violence against women and children with an aim perhaps more to “keep the voters happy” instead of diverting their energies towards institutionalising changes for long term safety and protection of women and children. The following quote by a WMP asserting the importance of the bill depicts these sentiments:

Today, the whole of India is in a sombre mood. We have the parents of Nirbhaya sitting here, watching us ... (Interruptions)... Why are they such special people that we listen to them? Not because their

daughter died... (Interruptions)... it is because they sold their land to get her educated... (WMP, December 22, 2015).

Perhaps due to the reactionary nature of the legal reforms proposed, the frames articulated by MPs through the years have not changed significantly in spite of the bill's many amendments. In total, the number of words spoken by women from the BJP on the JJA was 36% while women from the INC contributed 32%. This difference can be attributed to one particular WMP, a critical actor in the 2015 debate, who introduced the bill to parliament and answered all concerns raised by other members at the end of the debate.

Thus, overall we found support for our first hypothesis (H1) that women focus more on rehabilitating victims while men focus more on punishing perpetrators. Men spoke out more on procedures, punishment, and justice during JJA debates, while women put greater emphasis on the need to rehabilitate children and on society's role in helping children get back on their feet to lead a life with respect and dignity.

### **3.2. Sexual offences against children**

The second bill we examined, the 2012 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was an attempt to curb the menace of sexual abuse against minors. This bill originated from efforts by social activists, journalists, and non-profit organizations to make a separate law addressing the sexual abuse of people below 18 years of age and increase attention towards children in marginalized situations at high risk of abuse including children of sex workers, children on the streets, and those running away from home. Under POCSO, 'sexual abuse of children' refers to acts ranging from non-contact forms of abuse like showing pornography to more heinous acts like penetration. Stress is also placed on 'prevention' and 'rehabilitation.' Ensuring sensitivity of functionaries towards the child is also a major prognostic frame as the act's ultimate goal is to ensure the mental well-being of the child with help from professional counsellors, social workers and psychologists.

In the POCSO debate, there were relatively few participants, but two WMPs discussed each and every section of the bill at length, supporting it with meaningful suggestions, and using statistics to strengthen their arguments. One WMP from the BJP party (in opposition at the time), emerged as a powerful representative confronting a rarely admitted long-standing problem that deeply affects the country's moral and social fabric.

Sir, before I move on to the next clause, let me tell the honourable Minister that I am distressed as a mother that even this Bill, which seeks to protect all children in our country from sexual abuse, exempts the children of Jammu and Kashmir... I think, Sir, there are many among us today and those who might be watching the proceedings of this House who know that it is difficult for us to believe the reality that there may be people among us, in our families, in our circle of friends who will abuse the relationship of trust and abuse a child (WMP, May 10th, 2012).

The other highly active participant who gave multiple suggestions to improve the bill hailed from the leftist CPM (Communist Party of India (Marxist)). Appreciating the introduction of a separate bill to address sexual crimes against minors, she made claims to ensure rights of the child at every stage of implementation. She also made claims with regard to the age of consent and representing all youngsters, not only girls, who might be negatively affected by the bill.

Young people are getting married without the will of their parents. I am afraid the penal provisions against the offenders who are involved in a sexual relationship with minor girls provided in this Bill will be used as a tool against those young couples who are getting married without the permission of their parents (WMP, May 10th, 2012).

One MMP, who did not articulate the bill's relevance to himself (as a parent), nevertheless attempted to convey its importance to both mothers and fathers.

इसके साथ-साथ, मुझे यह भी विश्वास है कि महोदया, आप एक मंत्री हैं, लेकिन उससे पहले, आप भी एक माँ हैं दोनों माता और पिता यहां बैठे हैं, और जो हम महसूस कर रहे हैं उसके आधार पर, यह कानून बहुत अच्छी तरह से लागू किया जाएगा और बच्चे इस अपमान से मुक्त हो जाएंगे। [Along with that, I also believe that Madam, you are a Minister, but before that, you are also a Mother. Both Mother and Father are sitting here, and based on what we are feeling, this law will be very well implemented and children will be freed from this disgrace] (MMP, May 10th, 2012).

Once again the POCSO debate was re-introduced in parliament in 2017 by an MMP because the judiciary was supposedly getting penalised by having to report any sexual abuse they become aware of, during other family trials. Digressing from the issue of how the safety and security of children needs to be ensured, this MMP, one of the country's most prominent lawyers, proposed to make judges exempt from mandatory reporting of sexual abuse of children.

To sum up, in the POCSO debate, WMPs not only spoke out more strongly than MMPs, but WMP claims (such as appeals to parental identity and responsibility) also began to shape the way certain MMPs presented their own claims. In other words, the presence and discourse of women directly shaped claims made by men in the debate. What also stood out was that the rehabilitation of survivors, child-friendly approaches in implementing the law, mental and psychological impacts of sexual abuse and the needs and vulnerabilities of a girl child were only mentioned by women representatives as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frames articulated in 2012 and 2017 POCSO debates by MP gender.

Frames articulated in POCSO debates	By Men	By Women
Consent frame	0	3
Rehabilitation	0	2
Child friendly approach	0	2
Girl child	0	2
Definition of 'sexual abuse'	0	2
Use of statistics to make the argument	0	2
Consequence/mental and psychological impact	0	1
Social & state responsibility (reasons for delinquency)	0	1
Definition of 'child'	0	1
Rights of children	1	2
Male child as a victim	1	2
Criminal justice	1	2
Inclusion frame/different categories of victims	1	1
Personal experience/relatability to the issue	1	1
Implementation frame	2	2
Implications for the judiciary	3	0

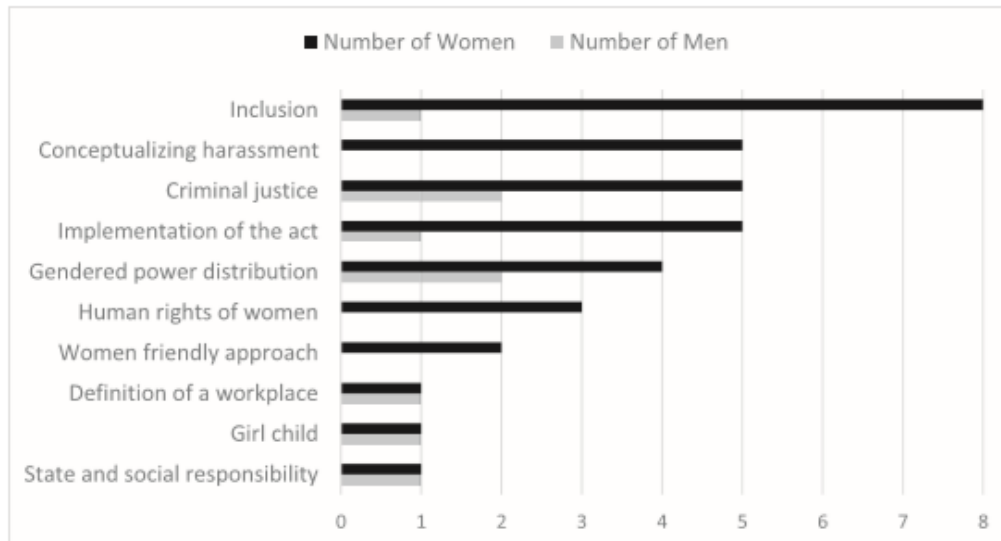
### 3.3. Sexual harassment

The third piece of legislation we examined was the 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (SHWWA). In this much more heavily attended debate, definitions of 'sexual harassment' and the 'workplace' evoked conflicting diagnostic frames as did the act's intended beneficiaries. Notably, women were far more likely to express an 'inclusion frame' than men by a ratio of eight to one. Thus, we found considerable support for our second hypothesis (H2) that women articulate a more inclusive vision regarding the scope of 'rights' and rights-holders, at least when it comes to issues pertaining to women. For example, a WMP proposed including women in both the organized and unorganized sectors, and full-time and part-time jobs. Another WMP claimed, students should be beneficiaries of the bill suggesting that schools be seen as workplaces. These

attempts to broaden the beneficiaries helped expose the vulnerability of woman in all formal public spaces.

Reflecting a pattern similarly uncovered in the JJA debates, we found men more likely to make procedural, technical, and legal claims falling under ‘implementation’ and ‘criminal justice’ frames while no MMPs made claims about making implementation procedures more ‘women friendly.’ Understanding the inherent power inequality in a job setting was also mentioned twice as often by WMPs as shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Frequency of frames articulated in SHWWA debates by MP gender.



Among the most vocal participants in this debate was a Muslim WMP from the BJP serving in the RS for three decades, who demanded an increase in the act's scope by highlighting that ‘sexual’ is not the only form of harassment that happens to women. Speaking on behalf of both women and men working in hierarchical institutions, she proposed changing the title to “Gender Harassment” instead of limiting the act to women or only ‘sexual’ forms of harassment.

आदरणीय मंत्री, हम सेक्स-सेक्स के बारे में इतना क्यों बात कर रहे हैं? क्या महिलाओं को केवल यौन उत्पीड़न के माध्यम से जाना जाता है, जहां वे काम करते हैं? क्या उन्हें वहां शारीरिक उत्पीड़न का सामना नहीं किया जाता है, या क्या वे वहां मानसिक उत्पीड़न के अधीन नहीं हैं? [Respected Minister, why are we talking so much about sex-sex? Are women known to go through only sexual harassment where they work? Are they not confronted with physical harassment there, or are they not subjected to mental harassment there?] (WMP, February 26th, 2013).

Offering a critical perspective, this senior WMP representing a minority religion in the RS considered the bill to be primarily a knee-jerk reaction to recent sexual crimes garnering national sympathy to which she expressed disappointment at over-emphasis on sexual crimes against women amidst under-emphasis on implementing existing laws.

As for rights-based framing, no men directly claimed that women's rights are ‘human rights’ compared to three women, one of whom blamed women's marginalization on the patriarchal structure of society stating that even in parliament women are treated as second-class members of society.

Sir, when we give the rights to women, we give them in pieces. As if we are throwing pieces at them (WMP, February 26th, 2013).

While a few women diagnosed patriarchal structures as ultimately responsible for discrimination against them, sexual harassment was repeatedly portrayed as a blow to the 'dignity' and 'sanctity' of a woman which shook the nation's collective consciousness. However, since a patriarchal social system rests on the regulation of women's sexuality by constantly portraying 'sexual crimes' as the worst on moral grounds, debate participants were inadvertently reinforcing women's subordinate social position. While sensitization of authorities was mentioned as a necessary step to deal with the consequences of harassment, the sensitization of society in general to accept the 'sexually exploited woman' back into the society was also not mentioned.

Another controversial element of the SHWWA was its proposal to take action against women who lodge false complaints with malicious intent. Though potentially intended to deter fraud, a woman from the leftist CPM contested this attempt to disempower women by essentially putting the burden of proof on members of the victimized group. Another woman from a smaller party, the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) also expressed frustration that most of India's women would not receive any protection from this new bill and thus she sought to expand its scope to include women working in rural settings.

आदरणीय महिला उपाध्यक्ष, मैं मंत्री से अनुरोध करता हूँ कि इस देश की आबादी ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में है। वहाँ महिलाएँ किसान हैं, जो खेतों पर श्रम करते हैं, जिन्हें सबसे ज्यादा परेशान किया जाता है। मेरे अनुसार, उन महिलाओं को इस बिल के तहत नहीं लाया गया है। [Respected Woman Deputy Speaker, I would like to request the Minister to consider that more of this country's population is in rural areas. There women are farmers, who labour on fields, who are harassed the most. According to me, those women have not been brought under this bill] (WMP, February 26th, 2013).

Despite differing proposals to improve the bill, the idea of instituting empowering and women-friendly legislation was shared by all WMPs regardless of party and state affiliations. Women called for changing men's mind-sets, providing legal aid to victims, and including women from backward castes and regions. Many women members also placed responsibility for a woman's protection on the man. Sensitization of men was suggested as an important solution to the problem. The MMPs, instead of stressing 'empowerment of women', reinforced society's gender hierarchy by suggesting that women need constant protection from the men around her. This protection was referred to as the 'moral duty' of a man.

What is the protection given (to the woman)? Father protects the girl. After marriage, her husband protects, and then subsequently, when husband becomes old, the sons protect her. The burden of protecting the females is only on the males...What Supreme Court has said is that women always require protection (MMP, February 26th, 2013).

### **3.4. Domestic violence**

The final bill we examined was the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA) scheduled for RS debate in 2005 before it became law. Despite multiple expressions of resistance by women politicians across parties and states who felt this bill needed more discussion, almost no time was allotted to debate the bill as the chamber's previous debate had gone over time. While this may have been a tactic to facilitate its passage, low priority was in effect given to parliamentary debate on domestic violence. Out of seven people who planned to participate, six of whom were women, the only person who (after pleading) was given a short amount of time to make a brief suggestion, was a woman from a leftist party who called for including children as potential victims of domestic violence. Two other women also quickly verbalized their disappointment with the way the bill was being passed.

मैडम स्पीकर, मैं इस बिल का समर्थन करता हूँ लेकिन मुझे अफसोस है कि ऐसे महत्वपूर्ण बिल, जिस पर बहस होनी चाहिए, उसी तरह पारित हो रही है।

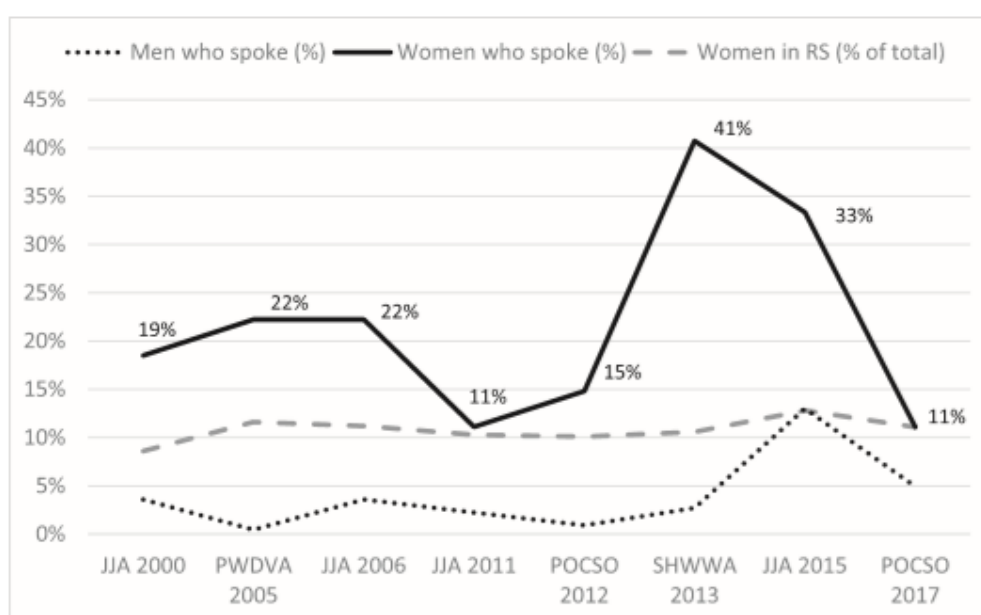
[Madam Speaker, I support this bill but I regret that such an important bill, on which there should have been discussion, is being passed like this] (WMP, August 29th, 2005).

#### 4. Discussion

Among the plenary debates discussed above, we observed that on all four bills the percentage of WMPs who spoke out was much higher than the share of MMPs. Thus, in spite of comprising a token share of the chamber's members, women played a critical role in these debates. We also found strong support for both our first hypothesis (H1) that women were more likely to speak up on behalf of rehabilitating victims and for our second hypothesis (H2) that WMPs advocate greater inclusion by expanding the scope of rights and rights-holders than do MMPs. However, we found only marginal support for our third hypothesis (H3) that women would be more likely to attribute violence against women and children to structural factors. While some women did bring up the issue of patriarchy as a pervasive social norm and practice, most men and women participating in these RS debates did not diagnose violence as emanating primarily from structural factors.

Turning to the issue of who represents, we found strong support for our fourth hypothesis (H4) that women representatives in parliament would speak more on behalf of women and children than men serving as representatives. Considering women averaged 11% of RS members during this period, a much larger percentage of WMPs spoke up compared to MMPs in every debate we examined as shown in Fig. 3. During the JJA debates, 22% of RS women participated compared to 4% of RS men in 2006 while only 13% of RS men participated versus 33% of RS women in 2015. The 2013 SHWWA debate was even more lopsided with 41% of serving WMPs participating compared to only 3% of MMPs. During the 2017 POCSO debate, 11% of WMPs participated as compared to 5% MMPs, and in the 2012 POCSO debate, 15% of WMPs raised their voice to support, criticize, and give suggestions while only 1% of the chamber's MMPs spoke.

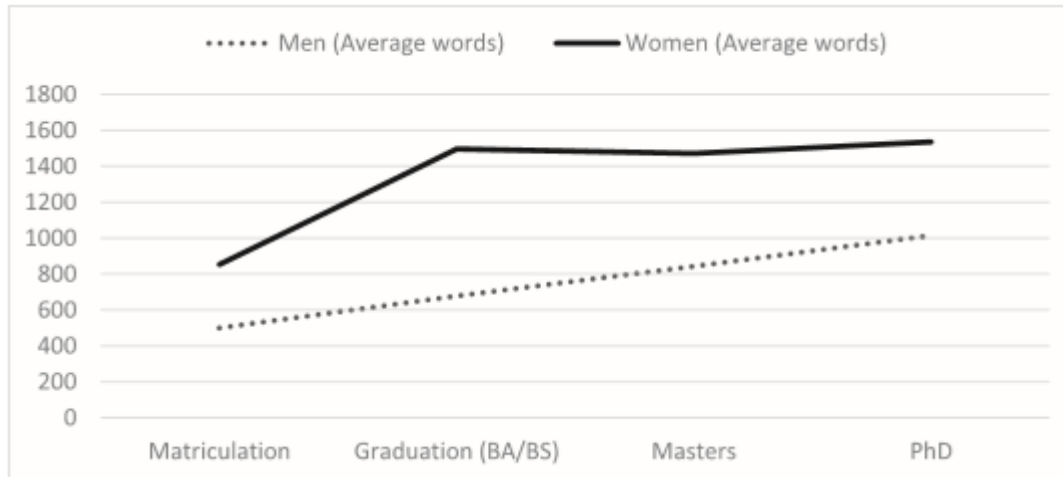
Fig. 3. Rajya Sabha MPs who spoke on violence against women and children.



Note: For PWDVA 2005 we included women and men who planned to give plenary speeches on the bill.

As Fig. 4 illustrates, among MPs with higher education levels, both women and men spoke more often compared to those with lower qualifications, but the average number of words spoken by WMPs across all four debates exceeded MMPs at every level of education. Thus, it is evident that women are still vocal on these issues even if they have less formal education.

Fig. 4. Average number of words spoken by MP gender and education.



Note: The graph shows the average number of words spoken by women and men in Rajya Sabha plenary debates on the four bills discussed in this paper.

We also observed that during these debates, the three most actively participating political parties by word counts were the INC, BJP, and CPM.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we found tentative support for our fifth hypothesis. While the leftist CPM is a much smaller party than either the INC or BJP, it played an active and stronger role in debates to address violence against women and children than all but the two largest parties. The prominent role of leftist party influence was particularly evident in the PWDVA when the only speaker was a woman from a leftist party. Men from leftist parties were also quite active during the JJA and POCSO debates. Thus, we found MMPs with a leftist ideology more prone to advocate on women's and children's issues than representatives from most other parties. For instance, among the three most active political parties in these debates, the ratio of words spoken by women to men was higher for the BJP (3.3 to 1) than INC (2.4 to 1) and lowest for CPM (1 to 1.2) suggesting different degrees of patriarchal views across and within these parties.

As for our sixth hypothesis (H6), we found tentative evidence that WMPs in general are more interested in confronting violence and harassment which impacts middle and upper strata women than that experienced by lower strata women and children. This inference which needs further examination stems from the fact that women representatives participated (or planned to participate) much more actively in debates over sexual harassment in the workplace than debates addressing sexual violence against minors or domestic violence.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined when and how women (and men) speak up in parliament on issues related to violence against women and children. Focusing on bills discussed in the upper chamber of India's bicameral parliament over the past two decades, we found that women, in spite of occupying only 11% of the seats, unambiguously spoke out more (in words) and proportionally more compared to men. Thus,

<sup>15</sup> Although Indian regional parties are sometimes seen as champions for disadvantaged groups including women (Joshi, 2012), their more limited participation likely reflects their smaller share of RS seats.



our findings indicate that in spite of having a mere “token” level of representation (Kanter, 1977), women MPs were able to make contributions on issues of vital importance to women and children that were significant both in terms of quantity and quality. We also observed gender-based variation in discussion frames. Most saliently, women consistently focused more on issues of inclusion and rehabilitation while men concentrated more on technical, legal, and procedural issues.

As demonstrated above, even in the absence of a gender quota, women's presence greatly deepened the extent to which proposals concerning women and children were discussed and what types of solutions were offered. To make further progress, however, we believe parliamentary rules should be changed to make the parliamentary environment more women-friendly. For example, excessive unruliness within parliament should not be tolerated and should lead to an MP's expulsion. It would also be helpful to ensure a critical mass of women are present in the RS (and LS) to challenge the patriarchal notions deeply entrenched in the country's socio-political context so that women's perspectives are put at the forefront of political debates and integrated into laws beyond just those that are directly concerning ‘protection’ or ‘welfare’ of women and children. Given, the diversity and heterogeneity of Indian society, adequate representation of all major social groups including women is essential to make the greatest possible improvements to people's lives. In this respect, much can be learned from Nordic countries like Sweden where an increase in women's numerical representation thanks in part to party-level candidate quotas has facilitated better substantive representation of both women and society as a whole (e.g. Freidenvall, 2013; Joshi & Navlakha, 2010).

Our study also found that one of the most outspoken political parties in condemning violence was one with a leftist ideology. Likewise, comparative research by Caul (2001) finds that ensuring significant representation of women in parliament essentially requires a multi-pronged approach including the salience of women's movements and activism in political parties, women at higher ranks of the party and parties with a leftist ideology. Thus, although the simplest means to increase women's representation in parliament may appear to be adopting gender quotas or reserved seats as proposed by the Women's Reservation Bill, there is a need for parties with leftist ideologies to take a lead in providing more women tickets (i.e. nominations) to run for elections and providing them key positions based on their capabilities instead of based on stereotypes associated with their gender.

Other potential reforms include accrediting only those political parties where women comprise at least one third of party leaders (or members) and disqualifying any parties that do not meet this requirement. Changing the LS electoral system towards a multi-member district party-list proportional representation system would also likely increase the share of women MPs by incentivizing parties to nominate multiple and diverse candidates in each constituency.<sup>16</sup> Proportional representation elections would probably also increase the representation of India's leftist parties who often hold a seat share lower than their vote share. Moreover, multi-member district PR elections would make it easier to apply gender quotas and the RS can take the lead in this area. Since the RS already uses a form of PR voting, it could modify its current electoral formula to adopt a candidate quota requiring that one out of every three members on a party's candidate list must be women and that at least one woman must be in the top two spots on each list. Not only would this help to make the gender composition of the RS more closely resembling society as a whole, but it could also potentially serve as a model for future reforms to the LS and state-level legislative assemblies.

---

<sup>16</sup> Studies find Asian parliaments with multi-member districts and proportional representation elections to generally have more WMPs than those with single member districts (Joshi, 2015; Joshi & Kingma, 2013).

## References

- Abeyratne, R., & Jain, D. (2012). Domestic violence legislations in India: The pitfalls of human rights approach to gender equality. *Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law*, 21(2), 333–378.
- Agnes, F. (1992). Protecting women against violence? Review of a decade of legislation, 1980–89. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(17), 19–33.
- Agnes, F. (2019). What survivors of domestic violence need from their new government? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 54(17), 1–5. Ahmed, N. (2020). *Parliaments in South Asia*. London: Routledge.
- Arora, B. (2014). Renewing India: Democratic accountability and parliament. In Y. Zheng, L. F. Lye, & W. Hofmeister (Eds.). *Parliaments in Asia: Institution building and political development* (pp. 207–227). New York: Routledge.
- Basu, A. (2016). Women, dynasties, and democracy in India. In K. Chandra (Ed.). *Democratic dynasties: State, party, and family in contemporary Indian politics* (pp. 136–172). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Beckwith, K. (2007). Numbers and newness: The descriptive and substantive representation of women. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 27–49.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 611–639.
- Bicquelet, A., Weale, A., & Bara, J. (2012). In a different parliamentary voice? *Politics & Gender*, 8(1), 83–121.
- Carli, L., & Eagly, A. (2007). Overcoming resistance to women leaders: The importance of leadership style. In B. Kellerman, & D. L. Rhode (Eds.). *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 127–148). New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Caul, M. (2001). Political parties and adoption of candidate gender quotas: A cross-national analysis. *Journal of Politics*, 63(4), 1214–1229.
- Celis, K. (2013). Representativity in times of diversity: The political representation of women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 41, 179–186.
- Celis, K., Childs, S., Kantola, J., & Krook, M. L. (2008). Rethinking women's substantive representation. *Representation*, 44(2), 99–110.
- Celis, K., Childs, S., Kantola, J., & Krook, M. L. (2014). Constituting women's interests through representative claims. *Politics & Gender*, 10, 149–174.
- Childs, S., & Krook, M. L. (2009). Analyzing women's substantive representation: From critical mass to critical actors. *Government and Opposition*, 44(2), 125–145.
- Chopra, J. K. (1993). *Women in the Indian parliament: A critical study of their role*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.
- Clayton, A., Josefsson, C., & Wang, V. (2017). Quotas and women's substantive representation: Evidence from a content analysis of Ugandan Plenary Debates. *Politics & Gender*, 13(2), 276–304.
- Collins, P. H., & Chepp, V. (2013). Intersectionality. In G. Waylen, K. Celis, J. Kantola, & S. L. Weldon (Eds.). *The Oxford handbook of gender and politics* (pp. 57–87). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Cowell-Meyers, K., & Langbein, L. (2009). Linking women's descriptive and substantive representation in the United States. *Politics & Gender*, 5(4), 491–518.
- Dhal, S., & Chakrabarty, B. (2018). Deepening democracy in India: The role of women parliamentarians and their challenges. In N. Ahmed (Ed.). *Women in governing institutions in South Asia: Parliament, civil service and local government* (pp. 59–77). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dhamoon, R. K. (2011). Considerations on mainstreaming intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly*, 64(1), 230–243.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.
- Franceschet, S., & Piscopo, J. M. (2008). Gender quotas and women's substantive representation: Lessons from Argentina. *Politics & Gender*, 4(3), 393–425.
- Freidenvall, L. (2013). Sweden: Step by step – Women's inroads into parliamentary politics. In D. Dahlerup, & M. Leyenaar (Eds.). *Breaking male dominance in old democracies* (pp. 97–123). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gangoli, G. (2007). *Indian feminisms: Law, patriarchies and violence in India*. New York: Routledge.
- Gangoli, G., & Rew, M. (2018). Continuities and change: The law commission and sexual violence. *Journal of Indian Law and Society*, 6(3), 112–124.
- Hancock, A. M. (2014). Intersectional representation or representing intersectionality? Reshaping empirical analysis of intersectionality. In M. Escobar-Lemmon, & M. Taylor-Robinson (Eds.). *Representation: The case of women* (pp. 41–57). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hasan, Z. (2010). Gender, religion and democratic politics in India. *Third World Quarterly*, 31(6), 939–954.
- Jacob, S. (2014). Gender and legislative performance in India. *Politics & Gender*, 10(2), 236–264.
- Jayal, N. G. (2006). *Representing India*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jensenius, F. R. (2016). Competing inequalities? On the intersection of gender and ethnicity in candidate nominations in Indian elections. *Government and Opposition*, 51(3), 440–463.
- Joshi, D. (2012). The impact of India's regional parties on voter turnout and human development. *Journal of South Asian Development*, 7(2), 139–160.
- Joshi, D. (2015). The inclusion of excluded majorities in South Asian parliaments: Women, youth, and the working class. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 50(2), 223–238.
- Joshi, D., & Goehrung, R. (2018). Conceptualizing and measuring women's political leadership: From presence to balance. *Politics & Gender*, 14(3), 350–375.
- Joshi, D., & Kingma, K. (2013). The uneven representation of women in Asian parliaments: Explaining variation across the region. *African and Asian Studies*, 12(4), 352–372.
- Joshi, D., & Navlakha, N. (2010). Social democracy in Sweden. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(47), 73–80.
- Joshi, D., & Och, M. (2014). Talking about my generation and class? Unpacking the descriptive representation of women in Asian parliaments. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 47(1), 168–179.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed sex ratios and responses to token women. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965–990.

- Kishwar, M. (1999). *Off the beaten track: Rethinking gender justice for Indian women*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Kumar, R. (1993). *The history of doing – An illustrated account of movements for women's rights and feminisms in India, 1800–1990*. Delhi: Zubaan.
- Kumar, S. (2019). Shifting epistemology of juvenile justice in India. *Contexto Internacional*, 41(1), 113–140.
- Kumari, R., & Dubey, A. (1994). *Women parliamentarians: A study in the Indian context*. Delhi: South Asia Books.
- Lenneberg, C. (1994). Women and political leadership in India: Able politicians or token presences? *Asian Studies Review*, 17(3), 6–14.
- Lombardo, E., & Meier, P. (2014). *The symbolic representation of gender: A discursive approach*. London: Ashgate.
- Madhavan, M. R. (2017). Parliament. In D. Kapur, P. B. Mehta, & M. Vaishnav (Eds.), *Rethinking public institutions in India* (pp. 67–103). New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Meier, P. (2008). Critical frame analysis of EU gender equality policies: New perspectives on the substantive representation of women. *Representation*, 44(2), 155–167.
- Menon, N. (2004). *Recovering subversion: Feminist politics beyond the law*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Menon, N. (2019). The gap between the feminist understanding of sexual violence and the law. *The WIRE*. February <https://thewire.in/women/sexual-violence-rape-law-india> (Retrieved May 25, 2020) .
- Mezey, M. L. (1979). *Comparative legislatures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mishra, R. C. (2000). *Role of women in legislatures in India: A study*. New Delhi: Anmol.
- Phillips, A. (1995). *The politics of presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Piscopo, J. M. (2011). Rethinking descriptive representation: Rendering women in legislative debates. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64(3), 448–472.
- Pitkin, H. (1967). *The concept of representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pittinsky, T. L., Bacon, L. M., & Welle, B. (2007). The great women theory of leadership? Perils of positive stereotypes and precarious pedestals. In B. Kellerman, & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 93–125). New York: Josey-Bass.
- Rai, S. M. (1995). Women and public power: Women in the Indian parliament. *IDS Bulletin*, 26(3), 110–116.
- Rai, S. M. (2012). The politics of access: Narratives of women MPs in the Indian parliament. *Political Studies*, 60(1), 195–212.
- Rai, S. M., & Spary, C. (2019). *Performing representation: Women members in the Indian parliament*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reingold, B., & Swers, M. S. (2011). An endogamous approach to women's interests: When interests are interesting in and of themselves. *Politics & Gender*, 7(3), 429–435.
- Roggeband, C., & Verloo, M. (2007). Dutch women are liberated, migrant women are a problem: The evolution of policy frames on gender and migration in the Netherlands, 1995–2005. *Social Policy & Administration*, 41(3), 271–288.
- Rubinoff, A. G. (2013). The decline of India's parliament. In P. Norton, & N. Ahmed (Eds.), *Parliaments in Asia* (pp. 13–33). London: Routledge.

- Shankar, B. L., & Rodrigues, V. (2011). *The Indian parliament: A democracy at work*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Singh, P. (2003). *Women legislators in Indian politics*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing.
- Singh, M. P. (2015). The decline of the Indian parliament. *India Review*, 14(3), 352–376.
- Singh, P., & Pundir, J. K. (2002). Women legislators in UP: Background, emergence and role. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37(10), 923–928.
- Spary, C. (2007). Female political leadership in India. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45(3), 253–277.
- Spary, C. (2014). Women candidates and party nomination trends in India – Evidence from the 2009 general election. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 52(1), 109–138.
- Swers, M. L. (2002). *The difference women make: The policy impact of women in congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor-Robinson, M. M., & Heath, R. S. (2003). Do women legislators have different policy priorities than their male colleagues? *Women and Politics*, 2(4), 77–101.
- Verloo, M., & Lombardo, E. (2007). Contested gender equality and policy variety in Europe: Introducing a critical frame analysis approach. In M. Verloo (Ed.). *Multiple meanings of gender equality: A critical frame analysis of gender policies in Europe* (pp. 21– 49). Budapest: Central European University Press.
- Wallack, J. S. (2008). India's parliament as a representative institution. *India Review*, 7(2), 91–114.
- Wang, V. (2014). Tracing gender differences in parliamentary debates: A growth curve analysis of Ugandan MPs' activity levels in plenary sessions, 1998–2008. *Representation*, 50(3), 365–377.

Dr. Sadhvi Kalra, PhD, is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning specialist at CARE USA. Sadhvi supervises evidence-based research to assess the impact of CARE's programs on empowering women and girls in South Asian countries. Sadhvi has been a Post-doctoral fellow at Singapore Management University researching women's representation in Politics. Her PhD focused on assessing impact of Child Sexual Abuse on the mental health of children and adolescents in India. Her expertise lies in mixed-method research and evaluation on issues associated with physical and mental health, gender justice and empowerment.

Dr. Devin K. Joshi is an Associate Professor of Political Science in the School of Social Sciences at Singapore Management University. His current research interests include gender and youth politics, parliamentary representation, and human development. Co- author of the book *Strengthening Governance Globally* (Paradigm/Oxford University Press), he has written over 35 peer reviewed journal articles with recent work appearing in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *Politics & Gender*, and *World Development*.