
Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights with Special Reference to the Role of Police in the Khurda and Malkangiri Districts of Odisha - A Critical Review

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Abstract

Women's rights constitute an integral component of human rights and are essential for ensuring equality, dignity, and justice in society. Despite constitutional safeguards and progressive legal frameworks in India, women continue to face systemic discrimination, violence, and socio-economic marginalization. The role of police as the primary law enforcement agency becomes crucial in translating legal provisions into practical protection mechanisms.

This study undertakes a comparative analysis of the role of police in protecting and promoting women's rights in two distinct districts of Odisha, Khurda and Malkangiri. While Khurda represents an urban and administratively advanced region, Malkangiri reflects the realities of a tribal, geographically remote, and underdeveloped district. The research highlights disparities in policing infrastructure, accessibility, awareness, and institutional effectiveness between the two regions.

The findings reveal that while Khurda benefits from better institutional frameworks and proactive policing initiatives, Malkangiri faces significant challenges due to infrastructural limitations, socio-cultural barriers, and lack of awareness. The study emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive policing, improved infrastructure, and community-based interventions to bridge these gaps. It concludes with policy recommendations aimed at strengthening police capacity and ensuring equitable protection of women's rights across diverse socio-geographical contexts.

Keywords

Women's Rights, Police Administration, Gender Justice, Crime Against Women, Khurda District, Malkangiri District, Odisha Police

1. Introduction

Women's rights are fundamental to democratic governance and social justice. In India, these rights are constitutionally guaranteed under provisions such as Article 14 (equality before law), Article 15 (prohibition of discrimination), and Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty). Over the years, legislative measures like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013) have strengthened the legal framework for safeguarding women.

However, the persistence of crimes such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking, and dowry-related offenses indicates a gap between legal provisions and their implementation. In this context, the police play a pivotal role as the frontline institution responsible for enforcing laws, registering complaints, conducting investigations, and ensuring justice delivery.

In Odisha, policing initiatives such as Mahila and Sishu Desks, gender-sensitization training, and community outreach programs have been introduced to enhance women's safety. Additionally, modern strategies like mapping vulnerable zones and strengthening surveillance systems have been adopted.

This study focuses on comparing the role of police in Khurda and Malkangiri districts, highlighting how socio-economic and geographical factors influence policing effectiveness in protecting women's rights.

2. Review of Literature

The discourse on women's rights and policing has been extensively examined by scholars across disciplines.

Flavia Agnes (2011) emphasizes that legal reforms alone are insufficient unless supported by effective enforcement mechanisms. She argues that the police must adopt a victim-centric approach to ensure justice.

Amrita Basu (2015) highlights the role of women's movements in shaping policy frameworks and underscores the importance of institutional accountability in law enforcement.

Ratna Kapur (2017) critically examines the criminal justice system's response to gender-based violence and stresses the need for police reforms, training, and accountability.

Senthil et al. (2023) discuss the persistence of gender bias within legal and social institutions, pointing out that structural barriers often hinder the effective implementation of laws designed to protect women.

Recent studies on policing reforms emphasize the importance of specialized units, community policing, awareness campaigns, and technological interventions such as helplines and digital reporting systems in addressing crimes against women.

3. Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a comparative and descriptive research design to analyze the role of police in two districts with contrasting socio-economic conditions.

Data Collection

Primary Data:

Interviews with police officers
Interaction with women victims
Discussions with community members
Field observations

Secondary Data:

Government reports
NCRB statistics
Books and academic journals
Official police publications
News reports

Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents, including police officials, legal practitioners, and women beneficiaries.

Study Area

Khurda District: An urbanized district encompassing Bhubaneswar, characterized by better infrastructure and administrative resources.

Malkangiri District: A tribal and underdeveloped district marked by geographical isolation and socio-economic challenges.

4. Objectives of the Study

To examine the legal framework for the protection and promotion of women's rights in India.

To analyze the role of police in protecting women's rights in Khurda district.

To study the role of police in protecting women's rights in Malkangiri district.

To compare policing mechanisms in both districts.

To identify challenges faced by police in protecting women's rights.

5. Discussion of Objectives

Objective 1: Legal Framework

India has enacted several laws aimed at protecting women from violence and discrimination. The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961) addresses dowry-related offenses, while the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) provides civil remedies for victims of domestic abuse. The Criminal Law Amendment Act (2013) expanded the definition of sexual offenses and strengthened penalties.

The police serve as the primary enforcement agency for these laws. Their effectiveness directly impacts the accessibility of justice for women.

Objective 2: Role of Police in Khurda District

Khurda district, being home to the state capital, benefits from advanced policing infrastructure and administrative efficiency. Police stations are equipped with Mahila and Sishu Desks, which provide a supportive environment for women to report crimes.

Regular awareness campaigns, safety drives, and community engagement initiatives contribute to increased reporting of crimes and improved trust in law enforcement. Surveillance systems, including CCTV monitoring and patrolling in vulnerable areas, enhance preventive policing.

The presence of trained personnel and better coordination with NGOs and legal institutions further strengthens the protection framework.

Objective 3: Role of Police in Malkangiri District

Malkangiri district presents unique challenges due to its remote location, tribal population, and limited infrastructure. Police efforts are often constrained by poor connectivity, lack of resources, and socio-cultural barriers.

Despite these challenges, police play a crucial role in addressing issues such as human trafficking, domestic violence, and exploitation. Outreach programs and awareness campaigns are conducted, but their reach remains limited.

Language barriers, traditional practices, and distrust of formal institutions often hinder effective policing. Women in these areas may prefer informal dispute resolution mechanisms, leading to underreporting of crimes.

Objective 4: Comparative Analysis

The comparison between Khurda and Malkangiri reveals significant disparities:

Infrastructure: Khurda has well-equipped police stations, whereas Malkangiri faces infrastructural deficiencies.

Accessibility: Police services are more accessible in Khurda than in remote areas of Malkangiri.

Awareness: Higher literacy and awareness levels in Khurda contribute to increased reporting of crimes.

Policing Capacity: Khurda benefits from better-trained personnel and technological support.

These differences highlight the need for context-specific policing strategies tailored to regional challenges.

Objective 5: Challenges Faced by Police

Several challenges affect the effectiveness of police in both districts:

- Social stigma and reluctance to report crimes
- Lack of awareness among women about their rights
- Inadequate police manpower, especially in rural areas
- Cultural and linguistic barriers in tribal regions
- Limited infrastructure and logistical support
- Gender bias within institutional structures

6. Findings

The study highlights the following key findings:

- Police play a central role in enforcing women protection laws.
- Khurda district demonstrates stronger institutional mechanisms compared to Malkangiri.
- Underreporting of crimes remains a major issue, particularly in tribal areas.
- Initiatives such as Mahila and Sishu Desks have improved access to justice.
- There is a significant need for gender-sensitive policing and specialized training.
- Socio-cultural factors significantly influence the effectiveness of policing in rural and tribal regions.

7. Recommendations

The study suggests the following recommendations:

- Strengthening Infrastructure:** Improve police facilities in remote districts like Malkangiri.
 - Gender Sensitization Training:** Regular training programs for police personnel to handle gender-based cases sensitively.
 - Community Policing:** Encourage collaboration between police and local communities to build trust.
 - Awareness Campaigns:** Increase awareness among women regarding their legal rights and available support systems.
 - Use of Technology:** Expand digital reporting systems, helplines, and mobile applications for easier access to police services.
 - Recruitment of Women Police Personnel:** Increase female representation in police forces to make institutions more approachable.
 - Policy Interventions:** Develop region-specific policies addressing the unique challenges of tribal and rural areas.
- Future research may focus on evaluating the effectiveness of technological interventions, comparative studies across multiple districts, and the impact of police training programs on improving gender justice.

8. Conclusion

The protection and promotion of women's rights require not only strong legal frameworks but also effective implementation by law enforcement agencies. This study demonstrates that while districts like Khurda have made significant progress in ensuring women's safety through advanced policing mechanisms, districts like Malkangiri continue to face structural and socio-cultural challenges.

Bridging this gap requires a holistic approach involving infrastructure development, community engagement, gender-sensitive policing, and policy reforms. Strengthening the role of police as a responsive and inclusive institution is essential for achieving gender justice and ensuring the protection of women's rights across all regions.

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