Psycho Social Dynamics of Women Education in Odisha:
A Study of Gender and Culture Variables

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Introduction

Gender is a phenomenon in twenty first century to ensure male, female equality. Provide freedom for development, ensuring equal participation for all there by getting equal opportunity. Gender is one component of the gender / sex system, which refers in the “set of arrangements by which a society transform biological sexuality into products of human activity and in which these transformed needs are satisfied.

Gender culture interaction gives rise to wide spread individual differences at the macro level of psycho-social functioning of the individuals and as well as the groups. Larger the variations among the cultures in a limited geo-economic and socio-administrative space, more complex are the nature of responses to developmental process among the people. The widespread diversities are the Indian cultures have been referred to as the source of sluggish development in most of our endeavors.

Gender identities signify the role distribution of male and female in a given society. It ensuring the male, female equality provides freedom for development, ensuring equal participation and providing equal opportunity to both males & females. From psychological point of view, it is recognized that the concrete behavior of individual is largely consequence of gender identity through socio culturally enforced rules and values.

Exclusion is a social phenomenon in which the members of the group are marginalized in the process of decision making which are significant and valuable from the point of view of the society. Ogbu1 in 2000 observed that people who are socially excluded they receive inadequate support from the public institutions. Their opportunities are constrained because mechanisms and institutions exclude them. Exclusion limits opportunities for the group through social isolation, limited access to education and discrimination is school. Most of the children who are socially excluded from school in the developing world come from in voluntary minorities. These are children whose parents differ from the dominate class, race and ethnic groups, and who have historically been marginalized in their own societies. These children often adapt to footsteps of their parents. Psychological exclusion of girls in our male biased social order, where the distribution of power, knowledge is vested with male predomination, may be creating serious limitation to women education.

Role segregation which segregates women from the power, knowledge, resources and equal opportunity. Mostly women are entitled to internal works like child rearing, performing household chores, and strengthening family lies, whiles males are assigned to external works like providing monetary support and maintain outside relations. This structure of role segregation is likely to be a serious handicap to women education.

Gender discrimination having sanction from religious & cultural practices, it is a very strong psycho social variable influencing women education. Compared to females males are the larger beneficiaries of the social order at every stage of life. Such conditions of

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1Ogbu
discrimination stand as impediments to women education in our country in many ways, a number of other implicit and culture specific psycho social variable also influence the women education.

**Status of women in Odisha:**

Women education in Odisha is a major challenge to contemporary system. It relates to major problems and issues exist in universalisation of school education in Odisha in the context of women education. The status of women in Odisha is very low. Literacy is Odisha is 63%. Male literacy is 75% and female is 51%. The literacy among rural and tribal areas is a major challenge today. The general literacy among Odisha is 23.47% of the total female population, 98% live in rural areas which reflect heavily on the low literacy of the women is the state with 29 percent. (1981 to 1991)Odisha occupies the 13th position is the country with regard to literacy & falls within 6 backward state with regard to low female literacy.

The inter-dependence of many socio-cultural and economic factors such as less enrollment of girl child in school, high dropout rate, domestic, responsibilities, child labour, financial constraints, etc are responsible for low literacy rate of the state.

The women work force constitutes only 20.79% (1991 census) in the state. The female work force constitutes 22.62% in the urban area out of the corresponding total female population. Nearly 78% of the female workers are in the agricultural sector and about 85.5% of women cultivations and marginal workers who do not get work for a major part of the year or work as casual laborers.

Women’s representation in administrative service, state politics, public sectors (3 out of 33 units are headed by women) etc. It is apparent that women representation is more or less negligible in comparison to that of males.

Crime against women in Odisha has grown considerably 405 rapes in 1993 to 1995. 187 dowry related deaths are seen state education will be used as against of basic in order to neutralize the accumulate distortion of the past; there will be well conceived edge in favour of women.

This will be an act of faith and social engineering. The removal of women illiteracy and obstacles into biting their access to and retention in elementary education will receive overriding priority through provision special support services, setting time targets and effective monitoring the state of Odisha shows a lot of inter regional variations in women literacy depending upon geography condition, ethnicity and level of development.

**Women literacy rate of Odisha context:**

**Literacy Rate**

Literacy rate of Odisha is 63%. Male literacy rate is 75% and female literacy rate is 57% which s below national average. The most vulnerable issues are total tribal literacy which is 37.37 and tribal female literacy is 23.47. The slow progress of female literacy is comparison to the female literacy indicates the disparities in addressing the issues as well as to assess the gender gap. Low level literacy in 7 tribal populated districts in the state which below 30% indicates the district disparities. The growth rate of literacy from 1971 to 2001 is from 9% to 23 % at the highest in 2001 Census in Odisha. Viewed from the
capability approach the situation can be measured and the reason of social exclusion of girls from the schooling and education can be assessed.²

Therefore issue of gender inequality is visible in terms of providing opportunities, professional / institutional frames work and also in disseminating knowledge base for empowerment. The female literacy in the state is although 51%, the unequal disparity of women literacy between developed districts like Khurda and Jagatsinghpur which is about 73% in one hand and in tribal district like Malkanagiri and Nabarangpur over all literacy of the districts is less than 40%. Thus the literacy gap between these districts is about 30% in case of overall literacy; but in case of tribal literacy the gap is about 40-50 percent. Similarly the women literacy of some blocks in KBK districts are less than 10% which account for the state initiative already taken up since last 50 years. It clearly indicate that inter districts / regional disparities is due to unequal distribution of resources or professional and institutional issues, lack of quality schooling and inadequate school curriculum and responsive teaching learning process. Although policy valued educational achievement as foundational for enhanced female public sphere as participation such as achievements and the public sphere were deeply marked by gender in qualities and the efforts made by the state system is evidently not enough to challenge to the gender status.

In Odisha many families, especially the poorest are the resistant to girls schooling. Girls are products of their upbringing, socialized, into sub-ordinate identities, with their neither agency nor vision for lives different to those modeled at home. Girls are generally expected to assume responsibilities in house work at a very earlier age. Role expectations from girls are that they share housekeeping chore like working and rearing up children along with mother which adversely affect their education. Low education level for girls is the small return anticipated from girls schooling.

In the education system where the teacher both Male and Female , products of high class and patriarchal society which schools are located once indifferent to gender in equalities and to the concern of poorest girls.

Sources: Theoretical framework:
  Nayar (1995) who observe that gender roles are culturally determined.
  Reiter (1975) who stated that society and culture who makes man and women as masculine & feminine.
  Ogbu is (2000) stated that people who are socially excluded they receive inadequate support from public institution.

Talcutta is of opinion that expressive activities of the women fulfill internal functions, for example to strengthen the ties between members of the family. The man performs the external function of the family providing monetary support and women performs the external work like child care, hose hold work etc. On the social institutions there are two models.

Fist one is role segregation which segregates women from the power knowledge, resources and equal opportunity.

The Second one is the gender role based on equal opportunity of male / female in terms of participation as a person than a female or male and equality is ensured.

²---- Perspective Plan on National Programme of Education of Girls at Elementary Level( NPEGEL), 2004, Orissa Primary Education programme Authority , Bhubaneswar www.opepa.in
It is observed that in majority of the traditional and developmental social systems, an individual has a choice to what he should or her extent as a confirmed representative of a socialization process, the consequences can be beneficial or malfunctioned. Minor or severe for every case by a behaviours socialization influence forming gender roles on expectations institutionalizing gender differences.

Gender in Indian content is perceived as non-entity. Indian socio-cultural system has created many customs and values which provide privileges to men and deprive the women. There are many restrictions to the women compared to man. In Indian women are through worshipped in ideological level. They are really sub serve to the male predominance since a long time. Therefore distribution of power, knowledge, resources and wealth is not vested to women. The authority and decision making is also not provided equally to women in the family. This discrimination is more psychologically which have been validated through social rules and practices, as a result which Indian context cultural symbols have retrained these inequality expressed in social behaviours.

Unequal distribution of work prescribed to men and women in the society confined the women in domestic domain. They become the object of the culture than the shareholder of the culture. As though the women play a vital role in creation of culture, it is the men who have owned and enjoyed the culture. Demarcation of work distribution of power and resources created disparity among the men and women. This disparity stretch away to socio-economic participation & debar women and girls from development.

From Indian context, it is true that the National and state policy is in favour of all round development of girls and empowers the women. This is a constitutional obligation since independence. Equality is the foundation of freedom. Development is not possible without education. The socio-cultural tradition recurrent in Indian society has not only debarred the women from freedom, but till now they have not been given right to speak or take a decision equally with men. Even knowledge and wealth is not equally distributed to women in society. They only adopt the development from patriarchal point of view and allow the men to participate in development than the women. Therefore it is evident that psycho-social construction of gender is directly or indirectly denies the development of women and girls than the males. In developing society when the cultural practices stand as impediments against gender development; the challenges are more complex in terms of breaking through the existing gender stereotypes from mindset of the people and also to imbibe new ideas on gender equality. Therefore gender empowerment has witnessed a struggling experience in last decades. This is not only effects the family but to institutions, knowledge and individual and the development is either blocked or failed.

Dr Amartya Sen in his book Development as Freedom, discussing on women empowerment emphasizes "education of girls" as one of the most important instrument for individual development. He recognizes the complex relationship between empowerment process, and variables of education, ownership, employment opportunities, the working of the labor market, employment arrangements, family and social attitudes in economic activities and the social circumstances affecting these attitudes.

Sen also takes of five instrumental freedom of individual these are political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security.

Out of these social arrangements cover provision of health, education and protective security.

Therefore Sen writes, “Nothing arguably, is important today in the political economy as
development as an adequate recognition of the political, economic and social participation and leadership of women.”

Martha Nasbhum, in her book *Women and Human Development* the capability approach has been discussed on gender aspect more elaborately these approaches have the following development policy.

1. It emphasizes the states social obligation, prioritizing arrangements for enhanced political, economic, social freedoms which privilege investments in transparency, health, education and security for all over excellence and privilege for the few.
2. It demonstrates why it is important for women to enjoy rights and responsibilities of citizenships as men do, that the achievement equal citizenship depends on women empowerment & why empowered gender identities are best suited to individual and social/national will being.
3. It provides a normative framework with which to assess and debate social norms, especially class, caste, religious or gender one, which can silence rational debate or identity option.
4. It demonstrates why social policy must strategies to address the ways in which personal, social and environmental factors affects the conversion of commodities, goods and services into capabilities and functioning.
5. It outlines why institution should within and be assessed according to democratic framework.
6. It emphasized fundamental importance of knowledge for change process and providing the most enabling environment for individual to come to informed rational choices.

Social embodiments approach: Robert Connell’s approach

While capability approach provide a normative framework to assess the socio political priorities, institutional environments and the processes relationship and outcomes of schooling, Connell’s work is used to explore how gender identities and aspirations are formed focusing on the way thing appear on the four structure of

1. Gendered Power,
2. Production
3. Emotional
4. Symbolic relations.

Connell’s approach outline the gender structure, demonstrate symbolic relationship between agency and structure, which in individual are both agents and objects, constituted within but also acting on and thus able transform the social world.

Connell focuses on the application of gender equality to eliminate discrimination arguing that if gender in equalities persists, the power, position of hegemony masculinity will remain entrenched, so global inequality will invaluable persist the meets argues that gender politics has to be understood by as more than an interest group struggle over inequalities. In the most general sense, gender politics is about the steering of the gender order in history. Based on above theoretical framework we get the sources and got the inspiration to work in women education of Odisha.

Problems and Issues in Girls Education

Generally girls are expected to assume responsibility for housework at a relatively
earlier age. Even in ordinary circumstances the role expectations from girls are that they share the housekeeping chores like cooking and rearing of children along with mother, which adversely affect their education. In addition to this the direct costs of education also debar families from sending their Girls to school although school education is almost free expenses on books. Poverty, provision of learning materials, sibling care of younger children, uniforms and distance of schools leave a heavy burden on poor families. Yet another factor contributing to low education levels for girls is the small return anticipated from girls schooling. When boy's education is viewed as an investment of family’s socio-economic status and an old-age security for parents; girls are destined to be married into other families and hence yield no return to their parents.

Again pubescent girls are withdrawn from schools because of social dangers associated with male school teachers and students. Thus socialization, gender roles and sexual mores all play important roles in depriving girls of formal education.

Although a few parent who give them good education and encourage them to have a carrier, still develop invisible walls in their minds, which suppress their girl’s initiatives, destroy their self-confidence. Their self-esteem even deny of pleasures at times. The parents of the daughters always live with the tension of perpetually standing guard over their daughters while sending them to school or college for education.

Girls especially from particular social groups such as SC/ST / OBC has disadvantage of their being women and socially backward in the context of primary education. Disparities in enrolment, retention and achievement level of girls and boys are significant due to some socio-economic, Socio educational psychological and socio linguistic situations.

**Socio Economic Condition**

Poor economic condition of the family is great hindrance to successful education. Most of the people in the rural tribal areas are practicing shifting cultivation as their primary occupation and hunting, gathering, fishing as secondary occupation.

Due to this practice they don’t get sufficient food to feed the entire family throughout the year. So education for them is a luxury, which they can hardly afford. Sometimes the child is an asset and contributes to the family economy. Further due to poor economic condition both the parents go out for work and the elder girls child takes care of the youngsters. So the poor parent is of opinion that if the child is taken away from her household work to attend schools, it will further reduce the economic stability of the family.

Deep-rooted socio-cultural and traditional practices have contributed in perpetuating of gender bias, which adversely impact on girl’s education. At home parent’s negative attitude towards education prevents them from going to school. But those who reach school are likely to face non-supportive environment in the classroom and in school. Further in some hilly areas or area having natural barriers parents has apprehensions about the safety of their daughters.

**Socio- Psychological Issues**

Psychological factors have an adverse impact on girl's education. There are some barriers, taboos, and prejudices against formal education in many tribal societies. It is feared that the girls will go astray after receiving education. There are also fear of the educated tribal girls losing their moorings and being cast adrift without any goal. These
psychological feelings of people prevents girl from obtaining primary education.

**Linguistic Issues**

For any education the medium of instruction is of great importance particularly in tribal areas people lived in isolation they have very less exposure to the outside areas. So a tribal child who has practically no knowledge of regional language is thus placed at a great disadvantage. In schools the language of the textbook is alien to tribal girl child. In comparison to the tribal adults, the tribal girls are more esoteric in using language. School becomes an alien place for the children in comprehension of content and language as a whole for which it seriously affects the access, retention and achievement.

**Some challenges**

- Lack of awareness among SC/ST community
- Biased attitude towards girls
- Lack of community contact / participation with the schools
- Biased behavior of general community towards SC/ST
- Illiteracy of parents
- Less importance to girls education
- Parents unwillingness to send their children to Co-educational school
- Girls child is burdened with domestic work
- Child marriage
- Dowry system
- Malnutrition
- Bonded labour
- Health problem of the girl child
- Untouchability
- Girl’s child is engaged in sibling care and domestic chores.
- Fairs and festivals
- Lack of conducive environment for education at home.
- Scattered habitation

**School Related Issues**

- Lack of basic facilities in school
- Lack of responsibility of Teachers and administrators. Continuous failure in Examination of children often leads to their leaving from school
- Primary schools have no sufficient space to open ECCE Centers
- Absenteeism of female teachers
- Unattractive school environment
- Absentee teachers
- Negative attitude of the teachers towards girls
- Lack of contact and sharing between parent and teachers
- Lock of gender sensitive and relevant T.L.M.
- Unsuitable school timing

**Socio Economic Issues**

- Children perceived as means of income generation
- Poverty of Parents
- Engagement of girls in domestic works i.e. animal rearing, collection of minor forest products.
Culture as the marker of gender disparity:

Culture can be defined as the values that the society determines for its own growth. But it has been found in the history of human civilization that culture is dominated by males and therefore the women are confined to domestic domain and males are exposed to public domain. Even the knowledge and power are dominated by the males than the females. The plea of such discrimination was again male biased. The reason is that since women bear the child and need separate facilities that led to keep the women in domestic domain. The social inequality related to women and property is such that the country has perpetuated the gender disparity in its culture and customs. The issue of women subservient to males is still influence the mass psychology.

Cultural practices and customs are perpetuated in the oral tradition. This is also supported by the religious rites and rituals. The irony is that, while the women is worshipped in the temple as mother goddess in ideal religious context, women is also burnt for dowry and many other reasons. Fire and women have a close affinity in life. Women starts her morning from fire and ends her night in fire.

The proverbs and songs found in the traditional society reveal that how the women are looked down. Some proverbs run as follows:

-Gaan kania Singhani naki

The meaning is

A village girl’s nose is always dirty.

Even if a girl from the village is beautiful she is always not appreciated. A prophet is not honored in his own country.

-Nimba Tiana, Jhia marana, Pachhaku guna.

It means,

Neem curry, death of a daughter
Is good for future.

Jhia Ghia.

Both the girl and butter should not be kept for long. If kept they spoil.

-Jhia janama paragharaku
Jhia janama chuli mundaku.

It means,

A girl is born to go to other’s house.
A girl is born to fire the oven of others house.

-Dela nari, hela pari

means a girl is given marriage is got rid of burden - is the cultural attitude of the society. Another proverb suns that

-Deba jahin tahin anba bhala.

This means you get a very good bride for your son, but you give your daughter any where you like.

Not only this, the songs and narratives in traditional society of Odisha bear the narration of gender discrimination. Folk songs of Odisha reveals the gender disparity in the songs. Some instances are as follows:

-Sajani Kashi baunshara dhuna
Munusha khauchhe sikara tuna
Maijhi chatuchhe nuna.

Translation:
O Companion,
The bow is made of tender bamboo
Husband in the home enjoys meat with his meal
Wife is licking the pinch of salt with rice.

If this cultural scenario of the society, it is necessary to understand why and how the formal education address the social issues in the school system. Our education system is yet to adopt a democratic school which really represent the socio-cultural aspects as the marker of developmental education and provide space to everybody respecting their self identity.

Conclusion:

Gender disparity is found everywhere in our society. Even though education and literacy has improved, the mindset of the society related to gender equality has not yet been eliminated. These cultural practices affect the school practices since the children, parents and the teachers are a part of the same social system. The curriculum, text book, teacher training and classroom practices in Orissa schools need much attention and regeneration in terms of setting up gender balance education.

Gender planning in education and gender financing are two most important aspects in school education programme. Active community participation and empowerment is absolutely necessary to create a space for education of girls and establishment of self esteem of girls.

The problems are many, but the social issues can be resolved only through social consciousness and awareness.

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