

Quality Education and Girl Children: A Case Study of a Slum

Dr Sadhana Satapathy

Associate Professor of Economics, B.J.B. Autonomous college, bhubaneswar
Corresponding Author: Dr Sadhana Satapathy

ABSTRACT: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunity to all is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) 2030 adopted by United Nations. Quality education for under privileged children is of utmost importance as these children are deprived of basic things in life because of acute poverty and as a result education has less priority in their lives. Coming to India, educating all i.e inclusive education for all, has been a major concern for policy makers. Against this backdrop, if one focuses on girls only, the situation is worse because of social and gender bias against them. Though certain states have achieved the targets, the situation has not changed drastically for some states. In the context of this, the present paper tries to analyse the problem of girls' education in the state of **Odisha**, one of the states at the lowest rung of development ladder in India. The paper has tried to analyse the plausible reasons behind the skewed attendance/enrolment of girls in education on the basis of field level data (100 samples) collected from two communities- fifty from Hindu and fifty from Muslim community in an urban slum.

Key Words: Education, Literacy, Schooling, Teacher, Constraints in going to school

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunity to all is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. United nation's agenda includes this as one of the twelve life transforming goals. The world has set a more ambitious universal education agenda for the period from 2015 to 2030. The vision is to transform lives through education, recognizing the important role of education as a main driver of development. Education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights. It is essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development. Policy makers recognize education as the key to achieve full employment and poverty eradication.

Thus, in this respect, provision of twelve years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education, of which at least nine years are compulsory, leading to relevant learning outcomes has become the motto of a country like India. It recognises that the provision of at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education and access to quality education leads to early childhood development, care and education. Inclusion and equity in education is of utmost importance to us and addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes are equally important. No education target should be considered met unless met by all.

However, the provision of basic education as a matter of right to all children in general and girl children in particular, has not been free from problems in a country like India. Poverty, social and religious stigmas, family responsibilities and biological reasons are equally important in the decision making process of families whether to send their girls to school or not. In this context, the role of quality education is of utmost importance for girl children to attend schools. For example, for a girl child, the distance to school, provision of girl's toilet at schools and provision of women teachers at schools are as important as say number of rooms, play grounds, drinking water facilities and canteens etc. Education is a Concurrent subject in India which implies that the burden of provision of education is jointly taken up by the Union and respective state governments. There are certain different parameters to explain a girl child's unwillingness to go to school apart from the other common factors such as **distance, drinking water facilities and play ground etc.** They are **social and family responsibilities, access to safe sanitary facilities (toilets), number of lady teachers and early onset of puberty**. In this context, the present paper tries to analyse the problem of quality education for girls in the state of **Odisha**, one of the states at the lowest rung of development ladder in India.

The **objectives** of the paper are as follows:

1. To discuss the concept of quality education and its implementation in India.

2. To look at the facilities given by Odisha -a state at lower ranks at all India level in almost all parameters including education- for quality education of girls.
3. To analyze the constraints faced by girl children for discontinuation of school at micro level.

Methodology: A sample of hundred households having girls-fifty from a Hindu community and fifty from Muslim community co existing in a slum near Bhubaneswar -has been selected randomly to find out the underlying constraints for their education. The slum is deliberately chosen as it is situated in the heart of capital of the state and hence access to schools and other facilities must be available as claimed by authorities. Standard simple statistical tools such as percentage and tables have been used to analyze the data. In the absence of any proper measure for quality education the data for formal education has been used.

The paper is divided into five sections including the present section. Section II highlights the concept of quality education and situation of education for children in India. In section III, the status of education in Odisha in general and girl's education in particular, has been discussed. We have also analyzed the facilities available for girl's education in the state at a macro level. In section IV, the findings of field level study has been analyzed. Finally, section V discusses conclusions of and policy prescriptions by the study.

II. EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN INDIA

2.1: What is Quality Education?

Quality education fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED).

The Global Action Programme on ESD launched at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in Aichi-Nagoya in 2014 has made elaborate discussions on quality education emphasising lifelong learning opportunities for all, in all settings and at all levels of education. This includes equitable and increased access to quality technical and vocational education and training and higher education and research. It is further committed to ensuring that all youth and adults, especially girls and women, achieve relevant and recognized functional literacy and numeracy proficiency levels and acquire life skills, and that they are provided with adult learning, education and training opportunities.

UNICEF takes a broader perspective and demonstrates that programmes must encompass a broader definition involving learners, content, processes, environments and outcomes. For example, learners must be healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities. Environments should be healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities. This definition allows for an understanding of education as a complex system embedded in a political, cultural and economic context.

2.2: Quality Education of Children in India:

Before further elaboration, one must admit that defining quality education is different for different regions from different perspectives. The quality education from a western perspective may be different from that of a developing country like India where there is lack of uniformity in language and culture, highly dense population and poverty. Qualitative education cannot be taken as improvement in quality of learning alone. Rather, provision of qualitative facilities at schools should be taken as a proxy for quality education in India where dropout rate is very high. Secondly, formal education, in the absence of any visible measure of quality, should be synonymous with quality education. The children should be attracted to formal schools first. The argument that teaching quality and lack of suitable curricula are responsible for thin attendance school is secondary as long as children do not come to school at all. In this context, certain factors such as proper infrastructure at schools, teacher pupil ratio, proper play grounds and toilets can reflect the quality education.

Article 45 in the Constitution of India was set up as an act which states "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years". The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE), is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009, which describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution. Subsequently, state governments have framed the rules under the RTE Act. Also, both MHRD and State Governments have released several notifications related to RTE Act.

India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the Act came into force on 1 April 2010. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools to reserve 25%

of seats to children (to be reimbursed by the state as part of the public-private partnership plan). Kids are admitted in to private schools based on economic status or caste based reservations. It also prohibits all unrecognised schools from practice, and makes provisions for no donation or capitation fees and no interview of the child or parent for admission. The Act also provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. There is also a provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them up to par with students of the same age. In the 1990s, the World Bank funded a number of measures to set up schools within easy reach of rural communities. This effort was consolidated in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan model in the 1990s. RTE takes the process further, and makes the enrolment of children in schools a state prerogative. Under its Right to Education (RTE) Act, passed in 2009, a free and compulsory education is guaranteed for all children aged between six and 14, and the most recent figures for primary school enrolment stand at an impressive-sounding 98%.

However, within government schools, pupils face numerous challenges. Overcrowded classrooms, absent teachers and unsanitary conditions are common complaints. Nor do enrolment figures necessarily reflect who is actually attending school. The number of primary age children not in school in India was put at 2.3 million in 2008, but other estimates suggest it could be as high as 8 million. According to an Indian Government Report, the primary drop-out rate in 2009 was 25%. Of the out-of-school children in 2008, 62% were girls; they make up two-thirds of illiterate 15- to 24-year-olds. And two-thirds of those not in schools were from those lowest in the caste system, tribal groups and Muslim communities, despite those historically oppressed groups making up only 43% of India's children.

2.3. Quality Education and Girls: Education is the only way a girl can be an informed citizen, leading the way for her to having her voice heard in society. However, there are various constraints- economic as well as social- which hamper the girls quality education. The first reason why girls are pulled out of school is because of family responsibilities. Girls provide free labour at home for the family. Many girls are kept at home because it is a better payoff than going to school. This problem is evident in India, even in urban areas, but more prevalent with poorer families. Girls can be found doing everything from farm work to household chores. The family plays a central role in a girl's life and shaping her future. The second reason why girls are kept from receiving a primary education is because they are pulled out early to protect family honour. Honour killings are prevalent among the poor. The third reason for inequality during primary education is because girls can't attend school due to inadequate facilities. Schools are unable to provide safe and sanitary facilities for young girls to attend, and with the population increasing at a rapid speed the priority for new facilities is given to boys. In many cases, though, this is exacerbated by basic infrastructural problems: roads, running water, and electricity are often scarce. The fourth reason girls are kept from school is because of the shortage of female teachers. Though less discussed but as important as other reasons is the onset of puberty at an early age. This might be the most important reason for girls not going to school. Now a days, the average age of puberty is thirteen years for girls as per different studies. The other equally important reason may be the pre-puberty anxiety of parents which may be responsible for not sending the girl child to schools. That is why the presence of female teachers is so important. Thus the emphasis should be on access to toilets and number of lady teachers as parameters for quality education for girls.

III. STATUS OF CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN ODISHA

As per Census 2011 population of Odisha is 4,19,74,218. Out of this, the Rural population of Odisha is 3,49,70,562 and Urban population is 70,03,656. The literacy rate of Odisha as per 2011 Census is 72.9 per cent. In rural areas the literacy rate is 70.2 per cent whereas in urban areas it is 85.7 per cent. The male rural literacy rate is 79.6 per cent whereas the female literacy rate in rural area is 60.7 per cent. The male literacy rate in urban area is 90.7 per cent and in case of females the literacy rate is 80.4 per cent. Among the districts the highest literacy rate in rural areas noticed is in the district of Jagatsinghpur (86.5%) whereas the highest literacy rate in urban areas recorded is in the district of Khordha (91.0 %). The lowest literacy rate of 43.9 per cent is recorded in the rural areas of Nabarangpur district whereas the lowest urban literacy rate of 74.5 per cent is recorded in the district of Malkangiri. The highest male literacy rate of 92.5 per cent is recorded in the rural areas of Jagatsinghpur district whereas the highest urban male literacy rate recorded is in the district of Khordha (94.2 %). The lowest rural male literacy rate is recorded in the district of Koraput (54.1 %) whereas the lowest urban male literacy rate is recorded in the district of Malkangiri (83.4 %). The highest female literacy rate in rural areas is noticed in the district of Jagatsinghpur (80.4 %) whereas the lowest rural female literacy rate recorded is in the district of Koraput (31.3 %). The highest urban female literacy rate of 87.5 per cent is recorded in the district of Khordha whereas the lowest urban female literacy rate 64.9 per cent recorded is in the district of Malkangiri.

No. of districts :	30
No. of Blocks	420
Rural population	83.30%
Urban population	16.70%
Literacy :	73.45%
Male literacy :	82.40%
Female literacy	64.36%
Rural female literacy	60.70%
Sex ratio	978
Child sex ratio	934

Source: Census 2011

The percentage of girls married below the legal age (16 years) is 19.1(DLHS 2007-8).It is quite high compared to many other states in India. Odisha's rank is 21 among all states. Thus, when one looks at the girl children (0-14 years of age) per se they are ready to embark upon a new life. In this context whether education is of primary importance to these under privileged girls remain a question mark. The state level rural female literacy rate is 60.74% (2011 Census). The state level main and marginal workers across different groups show the vulnerability of girls. Table 2 shows that nearly 19 % of girls are marginal workers and 6.17 % are main workers in age group of 15 to 19. If one considers the age group 5 to 14 (the school going age)it comes out to be roughly 4.8 %.Assuming that 15 to 19 year age group girls might be studying given a chance, it is 10.8 % in 5 to 19 age group. One can infer that the girl children are quite vulnerable to not going for formal education.

Table 3 gives an idea about the state of education in general and girl's education in particular in comparison to other states of India. It shows that in fact the rank of the state has improved in terms of girls' dropout rate at primary and upper primary levels of education. In some other sections though the state has fared better across the years but hasn't achieved the rank improvement as other states are doing far better than the state. Thus one can infer that (as the data shows) the state is trying its best in spite of limited resources.

Sl.No.	Age Group	Population	Main Workers (%)		Marginal Workers (%)		Main and Marginal workers (%)	
1	5-9	1989429	9121	0.46	21519	1.08	30640	1.54
2	10-14	2145090	26641	1.24	105371	4.91	132012	6.15
3	15-19	1952714	120469	6.17	374560	19.18	495029	25.35
4	5-19	6087233	156231	2.57	501450	8.24	657681	10.80

Source: Calculated from 2011 Census data

Sl No	Parameters	2012-13		2013-14		Change in Rank between	
		%	All India Rank	%	All India Rank	2012-13	and 2013-14
1	Schools Approachable by All-Weather Roads	85.16	22	87.2	19	3	
2	Ratio of PS to UPS/Sections	1.85	15	1.8	14	1	
3	Elementary Schools with Libraries	76.61	21	85.43	19	2	
4	Female Teachers in Elementary Schools	40.28	27	41.04	27	0	
5	Single Teacher Elementary Schools	7.39	24	5.79	18	↑	
6	Enrolment of SC Girls	48.89	14	48.88	14	0	
7	Enrolment of ST Girls	48.53	17	48.79	15	2	
8	Enrolment of OBC Girls	48.37	22	48.27	19	3	
9	Primary Enrolment Girls : Boys	0.93	18	0.93	18	0	
10	Upper Primary Enrolment Girls : Boys	0.96	15	0.95	16	-1	
11	Girls' Dropout at Primary Level	5.21	13	3.49	16	-3	
12	Girls' Dropout at Upper Primary Level	4.62	12	3.52	14	-2	
13	Girls' Transition Primary to Upper Primary	86.99	22	88.8	21	1	

Source : Elementary Education in India, Flash Statistics, 2012-13 and 2013-14, NUEPA

Table 4 shows the number of women teachers at different levels of education in Odisha. It gives an idea that the number of lady teachers are increasing from 2012-13 to 2013-14 at upper primary and secondary level of education in both rural and urban areas. The objective is to show that there is a concern for girl students as we assume that the lady teachers would be more competent to handle the school going girls aged between nine to sixteen.

	Women Teachers at Upper Primary			Women Teachers at Secondary		
	Rural	Urban	Both	Rural	Urban	Both
2011-12	48,651	14,258	62,909	13,360	6,454	19,814
2012-13	54,082	16,335	70,417	16,099	7,730	23,829
2013-14	59,587	16,538	76,125	17,592	7,524	25,116

Source: : Elementary Education in India, Flash Statistics, 2012-13 and 2013-14, NUEPA

As already mentioned sanitary conditions offered by schools are extremely important for girls at different levels of education in general and girls going through pre puberty and puberty situation in particular. Table 5 shows the statistics of it at different levels of education between 2011-12 and 2013-14 for both rural and urban Odisha. The data shows some discrepancy in the sense that for the year 2012-13 the figures are lower compared to the other two years. Never the less, assuming that the data being little overestimated, we might conclude that the sanitary conditions provided at schools are not as good as it should have been.

Table 5 : Status of Girls Toilets Across Different Educational Levels in Odisha,2011-14							
Primary							
Sl.No	Years	Rural		Urban		Both	
		Total	Functional	Total	Functional	Total	Functional
1	2011-12	17,423	10754(61.72)	1,383	873(63.12)	18,806	11627(61.83)
2	2012-13	34,723	11299(32.54)	2,741	936(34.15)	37,464	12235(32.66)
3	2013-14	44,813	33469(74.69)	3,406	2639(77.48)	48,219	36108(74.88)
Upper Primary							
1	2011-12	14,253	8696(61.01)	1,374	786(57.21)	15,627	9482(60.68)
2	2012-13	20,868	9032(43.28)	2,051	824(40.18)	22,919	9856(43.00)
3	2013-14	25,293	19456(76.92)	2,398	1880(78.40)	27,691	21336(77.05)
Secondary							
1	2011-12	5,002	2830(56.58)	691	365(52.82)	5,693	3195(56.12)
2	2012-13	6,699	3102(46.31)	889	377(42.41)	7,588	3479(45.85)
3	2013-14	7,319	5614(76.70)	980	755(77.04)	8,299	6369(76.74)
Source: Calculated from Digital Gender Atlas For Advancing Girls Education, Govt Of India Portal.							
Note: The figures in parentheses are percentages							

IV. FIELD FINDINGS

To verify the status of quality education at a micro level and to see what has happened to girls at a particular place and time, a sample of 100 households from two different communities-Hindu and Muslim- were chosen randomly from a nearby slum in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. There are 436 slums in and around Bhubaneswar (Bhubaneswar Municipality Corporation, BMC) with 80665 H.Hs and a population of 301611. The sample households are chosen from Press Colony Basti, Ward No.41. The slum has 317 H.Hs with 1084 population which is a big slum area. It is composed of Hindu, Muslim and in migrants. All the children are going to the nearby government school. The school has a toilet which is locked by the teachers according to the respondents. Mid Day meals are provided by the school authorities. There is an Anganwadi in the slum. There is also a play school run by a NGO Ruchika in the slum.

In our sample, there are 139 boys (60 for Hindus and 79 for Muslims) and 183 girls (70 for Hindus and 113 for Muslims) (Table 6). The number of children per family for the sample is 3.03. The number of children per family is 2.6 and 3.83 for Hindus and Muslims respectively. Average age of boys is 10.33(8.44 for Hindus and 13.32 for Muslims). The average age of girls for the sample is 12.74 (11.34 for Hindus and 14.50 for Muslims).

Table 6: Profiles of the Sample Respondents							
No of Households	No of boys	No of girls	Total	Avg no of children per family	Avg age of boys	Avg age of girls	
HINDU							
50	60	70	130	2.6	8.44	11.34	
MUSLIM							
50	79	113	192	3.83	13.32	14.50	
Total 100	139	183	322	3.03	10.33	12.74	
Source: Field Study							

Table 7 below explains the educational status of girls in the families. A high percentage of girls are not going to school (45.50%). It is higher for the Muslim community (48.15%) compared to Hindus (42.86%). Though the discontinuity percentage is higher for Muslim community, a higher percentage of them are attending secondary education(33.33%).

Table 7: Educational Status of Girl Children (in %)				
Continuing some form of Education				Discontinued
Play School	Anganwadi	Primary	Secondary	
HINDU				
11.43	8.57	25.71	11.43	42.86
MUSLIM				
3.70	3.85	11.11	33.33	48.15
TOTAL				
7.57	6.14	18.41	22.38	45.50
Source: Calculated from field data				

For finding the constraints we decided on certain questions which were relevant to our survey. Most of the respondents gave answers to the questions given in Table 8. Some other questions like eve teasing was answered by only one respondent and hence was removed from the questionnaire.

Table 8: Reasons for discontinuing (in %)			
	HINDU	MUSLIM	TOTAL
puberty	0.00	7.69	3.57
marriage	20.00	92.31	53.57
household work	40.00	–	21.43
Earning by self	26.67	0	14.29
Others	13.33	0	7.14
Source: Calculated from field data			

Table 8 shows that for the **Hindu** community girls, helping in household work is the major reason for discontinuing studies. For **Muslim** community, girl's marriage is the biggest factor for doing so. Among Hindu girls, earning by self is a big decision factor for not going to school. This is not so in case of Muslim girls though a higher percentage of girls go for secondary education (33.3%). The pattern is puberty, training for H.H work and marriage in that order.

V. SUMMARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Quality education is difficult to measure. Again same set of parameters cannot be applied for girls and boys to assess quality education. A large number of girls discontinue studies due to a number of factors. Thus provision of school and other infrastructural facilities are not enough to motivate girls for continuing education. Other non economic factors also play important roles as well in the decision making process. That was substantiated in our field study. It was found that getting puberty and being ready for marriage and helping in household chores are two major hindrances across two different communities. Community attitude is as important as mother's education and other factors. Therefore the thrust of policy makers should be to look beyond figures and go for alternative measures

Success of the Education 2030 agenda requires sound policies and planning as well as efficient implementation arrangements. It is also clear that the aspirations encompassed in the proposed SDG 4 cannot be realized without a significant and well-targeted increase in financing of education.

Quality education from western perspective may not be equal to quality education from oriental perspective. There are quite a number of factors responsible for this difference. Population, poverty, social attitude and institutional support etc are a few but equally important factors which prevent the third world countries to follow quality education norm as followed in western countries.

Therefore the thrust of policy makers should be to look beyond figures and go for alternative measures. None the less facilities at nearby schools cannot alone lure the girls to schools.

Note:

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the total student enrolment in a given level of education, regardless of age expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age group population in a given school year.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of Girls GER to Boys GER in a given level of education.

Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is the average number of pupils (students) per teacher at a specific level of education in a given school-year.

Dropout Rate is the percentage of students who drop out from a given grade or cycle or level of education in a given school year.

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