



AN ASSESSMENT OF GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION AMONG ST HOUSEHOLDS IN NILAGIRI BLOCK OF ODISHA

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Abstract: Every child deserves to reach her or his full potential but unfortunately in a developing and emerging country like India gender disparity is a pervasive issue. It is a matter of concern that even after 75 years of independence and the constitutional commitment by Govt. of India for providing “Education for All”, there exists a wide gender gap in education amidst the weaker sections of the society. In India due to the patriarchal nature of the society, girls are not given the equal educational opportunity which limits their potential as individuals and limits their access to economic opportunities and thereby creating obstacles in the pathway of attaining the Sustainable development goal - 4. Keeping this in view, the purpose of our study is to find out the gender disparity in education among ST households across age groups and to discuss the contemporary challenges associated with gender disparity in the study area. This study is based on primary data collected from Tenda village situated in Nilagiri block of Balasore district in Odisha. This village is purposively selected because of very low literacy rate and high gender gap in literacy rate. Again 10 percent (160 Households) of the total population of this village is randomly selected as sample size for our study purpose. Findings reveal that, a 100 percent illiteracy is recorded among the people aged 60 and above followed by the age group 24-60 years which is 68 percent. The value of GPI is very low (0.14) in the age range of 24-60 years at upper primary level and there is a significant gender gap at higher levels of education amidst the ST households. This study concludes by addressing some policy measures which will help to foster sustainable, resilience and inclusive economic growth by improving the educational status of poor and marginalized women.

Keywords: Gender disparity, Education, Schedule Tribes, GPI, ST women

I. INTRODUCTION

India is home to a myriad of people coming from different social and cultural backgrounds. As per 2011 census, 10.42 crore Indians are notified as ‘Scheduled Tribes’ which constitutes 8.6 percent of countries total population and 11.3 percent of the

total rural population. However, in the field of education, the weaker sections have fallen far behind in comparison to other communities. As per the Indian Constitution education is one of the fundamental human rights. In order to ensure basic minimum education to all, enormous efforts are being made by the state and central government. It is a subject of serious concern that in spite of all these efforts, there prevails inequality and injustice amidst the weaker sections (SC and ST'S). In India due to the patriarchal nature of the society, girls are not given the equal educational opportunity which limits their potential as individuals and limits their access to economic opportunities and thereby creating obstacles in the path of Inclusive Growth and achieving the Sustainable development goal - 4.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various studies have been done on this literature. A brief review of the existing principal studies and their findings which are relevant to the present study has been presented here.

Research reveals that, girls in rural areas especially SC and ST children are, still deprived of the basic education there exists a widespread gender disparity in educational attainment within disadvantaged communities [2]. Though Gender Parity Index at different levels of education is improving steadily, still there prevails a wide gap between male and female literacy levels [3]. At primary level and upper primary level the gender gap in education amidst SC and ST is just about 30 percent and 26 percent respectively [2].

Rahaman and Y.Sharma (2021) [5], their paper explains the state wise analysis of gender parity in higher education. They found that, " Bihar has the lowest Gender Parity Index that is (0.58) and (0.67) amidst SC and ST students respectively in higher education whereas the Union territory of Daman has scored highest GPI (1.52) among ST students and Kerala has been found to have the highest GPI (1.85) among SC students in higher education". They also revealed that in technical courses, the female participation is very low in comparison to non-technical courses.

Studies reveal that a multitude of factors are responsible for gender disparity in education. Socioeconomic factors like gender bias in the minds of society in favor of boys, early marriage, early responsibility, insecurity of female students, household chores, sibling care, discriminatory practices, lack of role model, helping in agricultural activities, limited financial resources, lack of scholarships, lack of livelihood opportunity, lack of proper sanitation facility limit women's educational opportunities in higher education {[1],[2], [4], [8], [9], [10]}

N.Goswami (2022) [7] in her paper, "Unequal higher educational attainment across social backgrounds in West Bengal, India" reveals that disparities in household

expenditures, financial status of the family and types of educational institution attended appear to be responsible for unequal higher educational attainment.

Rationale of the Study

One of the important indicators of Human Development is literacy rate, which is very low in the study area that is only 47.44 percent as per the Census 2011. Thus Tenda village has a lower literacy rate compared to 69.9 percent of Baleswar district. The male literacy rate in the study area is 59.07 percent and the female literacy rate is 36.98 percent. Hence the gap in male-female literacy rate is 22.09(very high), which clearly reflects that gender disparity in education is not just a women's issue; rather it is a global and developmental issue. Therefore additional studies are yet to be undertaken so that the problems and magnitude of each responsible factor can be more stridently and clearly enunciated and the possible solutions might be invented.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What is the educational status in the study area across different age groups?
2. What is the Gender Parity Index at different levels of education?
3. What are the major challenges and problems of gender equality in education?

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Keeping in view of the problem for the present study, the following objectives have been framed.

1. To highlight the educational status in the study area across different age groups.
2. To find out the Gender Parity Index at different levels of education.
3. To identify the challenges of gender equality in education.

V. DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on primary data collected from Tenda village situated in Nilagiri block of Balasore district in Odisha. This village is purposively selected as the area of this study because of very low literacy rate and high gender gap in literacy rate and on the basis of proportion of population (100 percent population of this village constitutes Schedule Tribes). Again 10 percent (160 Households) of the total population of this village is randomly selected as sample size for our study purpose. The study was conducted during the month of December 2023. Descriptive statistics like frequencies, percentages and graphs are used for analysis.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Gender Disparity

Gender disparity in education refers to differences in educational opportunities, enrolment rates, dropout rates, literacy rate, academic achievement and access to tertiary education. It is a multidimensional issue affecting social progress and economic development of a country.

Indicators of Gender Disparity

This paper uses 4 indicators to measure the gender disparity in education. These are given below:

1. Literacy Rate
2. Gross Enrolment Ratio
3. Gender Parity Index
4. Dropout Rate

Background of the Study Area

Tenda village is situated in Nilagiri block of Baleshwar district in Odisha. The total population of this village is 1678 as per 2011 census. The literacy rate is very low (47.4%) as compared to the district level (79.79%), state level (72.87%) and national level (72.98%). The surveyed households have a total population of 309, out of which 144 are males and 165 are females. The population of children aged 0-5 years in the study areas is 22 constituting 7.11% of the total population.

Gender and Age Distribution in the Study Area

Table 1: Gender Distribution in Different Age groups Among ST Households

Gender	0-5	6-14	15-23	24-60	60 and above	Total
Male	14 (63.63)	15 (42.85)	40 (44.45)	70 (46.67)	5 (41.67)	144 (46.60)
Female	8 (36.37)	20 (57.15)	50 (55.55)	80 (53.33)	7 (58.33)	165 (53.40)
Total	22 (7.11) (100)	35 (11.32) (100)	90 (29.12) (100)	150 (48.54) (100)	12 (3.88) (100)	309 (100) (100)

Note: Values in the parenthesis are column and row percentages)

Source: Primary data

The above data shows the gender distribution of the total population in different age groups which clearly indicates that out of the total population, majority population

48.54 percent lies in the age group of 24-60 and a very low proportion of population 3.88% comes under the age group of 60 and above. Out of the total population female constitutes 53.40 percent reflecting a healthy sex ratio as a whole. the sex ratio across different age groups shows that sex ratio is unfavourable to female in the age group 0-5 (only 36.37 percent), but it is favourable in the age group of 6-14 (57.15 percent) and 60 and above (58.33 percent).

Literacy Rate

One of the important indicators of gender disparity is literacy rate. In many underdeveloped and developing countries, women have lower literacy rates than men, limiting their access to economic opportunities and empowerment.

Early Educational Attainment

The early childhood education is very crucial because the foundations of all learning are laid during these years. Studies shows that early education increases learning potential, reduces the chances of drop out and repetition and improves outcomes at all levels of education.

Now let us have a look on the literacy status and educational attainment at different levels of education and across various age groups in the study area.

Table 2: Early Education (1-5 Years)

	<i>Currently Attending the Anganwardi Kendra</i>		
	<i>Yes(%)</i>	<i>No(%)</i>	<i>Total(%)</i>
Male	71.42	28.58	100
Female	62.5	37.5	100
Total	68.18	31.82	100

Source: Primary data

The above Table states the early educational status of children in the age group of 1-5 years in the study area. Data shows that 37.5 percent girls are not attending any educational institution whereas, 71.42 percent boys are currently attending Anganwadi Kendra. The Gender parity index for currently attending school stands at 0.875.

Table 3: Literacy Status of Male and females aged above 5 (in %)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Gap in male- female literacy rate</i>
Literate	67.70	38.21	51.56	29.49
Illiterate	32.30	61.79	48.44	NA

Source: Primary data

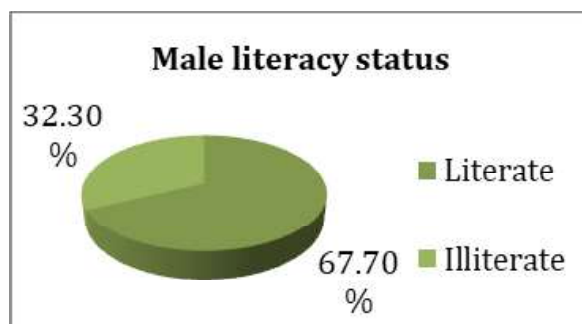


Figure 1: Literacy Status of Male

Source: Primary data

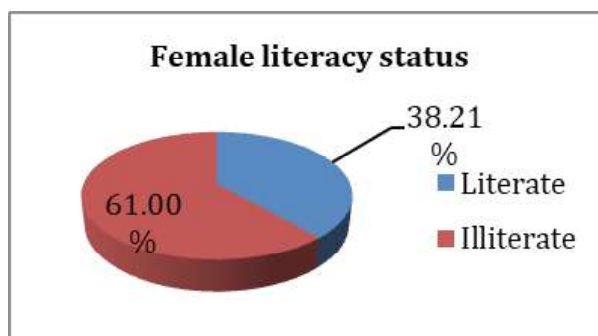


Figure 2: Literacy Status of Female

Source: Primary data:

Statistics shows that half of the total population in Tenda village are illiterate. Literacy rate is 51.56 percent which is not satisfactory. Male literacy rate is 67.70 percent and female literacy rate is 38.21 percent reflecting a high gender gap in literacy rate.

Table 4: Education Level of Individuals Aged above 5 across age groups (in %)

Level of Education	Age groups				Total
	6-14	15-23	24-60	60 and above	
Illiterate	0	27.78	68	100	48.44
Primary	42.86	16.67	11.34	0	17.78
Upper primary	57.14	17.77	9.33	0	16.02
Secondary	0	25.56	7.33	0	11.84
Higher secondary and above	0	12.22	4	0	5.92

Source: Primary data

Table 4 indicates the level of education attained by the population in various age groups. A 100 percent illiteracy is recorded among the people aged 60 and above followed by the age group of 24-60 (68 percent) and 15-23(27.78 percent). The highest level of primary and upper primary level of education is obtained by 6-14 years age groups. It is also observed from our study that the population in the age group of 15-23 years, 25.56 percent have obtained the secondary level of education which is highest in comparison to other age groups. The percentage of young population who has received the higher secondary levels of education is very low, indicating a high dropout rate at higher levels of education across various age groups.

Gross Enrolment Ratio

Another important indicator of gender disparity is Gross Enrolment Ratio. It is a fundamental tool used in education to assess the extent of student enrolment in a level of education, such as primary, secondary or tertiary education. High GER indicates high degree of participation regardless of age.

The formula for calculating GER is:

$(\text{Number of enrolled students/ population in corresponding age group}) * 100$

GER at primary level= $\text{Enrolment in primary level/population of official age group for primary level} * 100$

GER of male children = $(\text{No of male children enrolled/No of male children in that specific age group}) * 100$

GER of female children = $(\text{No of female children enrolled/No of female children in that specific age group}) * 100$

Gender Parity Index

Gender Parity Index is a socioeconomic index commonly intended to measure the relative access to education of males and females. It is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education. If the value of GPI is less than one, then GPI is in favours males. While, a GPI value greater than one designates that gender disparity is in favour of females. The closer a GPI is to one, the closer a country is to achieving equality of access between males and females. Hence, with the emphasis of Education for All on gender equality in education, GPI is generally used to examine the progress towards the goals established by this initiative.

It is evident from the Table 5 that, there is a declining trend of Gross Enrolment Ratio at higher levels of education. If we compare the Gross Enrolment of females with those males at different levels of education, we found that Gross Enrolment of males is more than that of females. At secondary and higher secondary level Gross Enrolment of females is totally unsatisfactory.

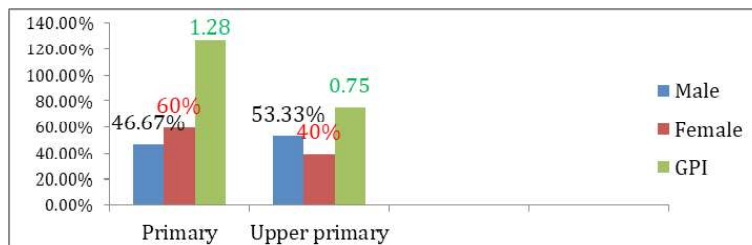
Table 5: Gross Enrolment Ratio and GPI at different levels of Education

	Male(%)	Female(%)	Total(%)	GPI= GER (female)/ GER (male)
Primary(1-5)	85.7	87.5	86.66	1.02
Upper primary (6-8)	100	75	85	0.75
Elementary (1-8)	93.33	80	85.71	0.85
Secondary(9-10)	42.5	12	25.55	0.28
Higher Secondary(11-12)	17.5	8	12.22	0.45

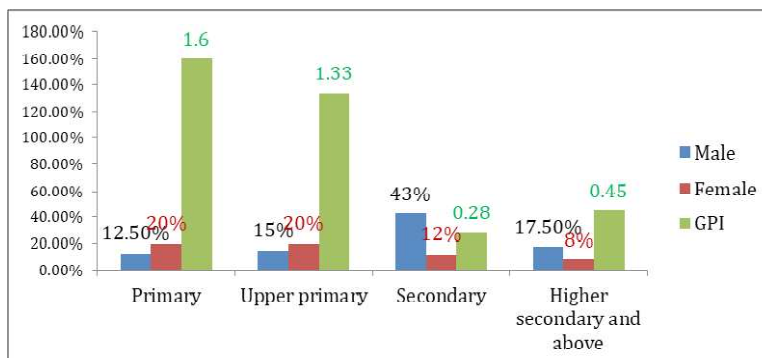
Source: Primary data

The Gender parity index provides insights into females and males relative access and participation in the education system. Table no-5 shows that Gender parity index at the primary level is 1.02 indicating that gender parity is in favour of females. It is observed from the table that except at primary level, Gender parity index at various levels of education is less than one indicating that gender parity is in favours of males and, it is very low at secondary level of education (0.28).

Hence, it is clear that woman's face significant challenges in accessing higher level of education, resulting in lower enrolment rates than their male counterparts.

**Figure 3: GPI at Elementary level in the age group of 6-14 years**

Source: Primary data

**Figure 4: Level of Education and GPI in the age group of 15-23 years**

Source: Primary data

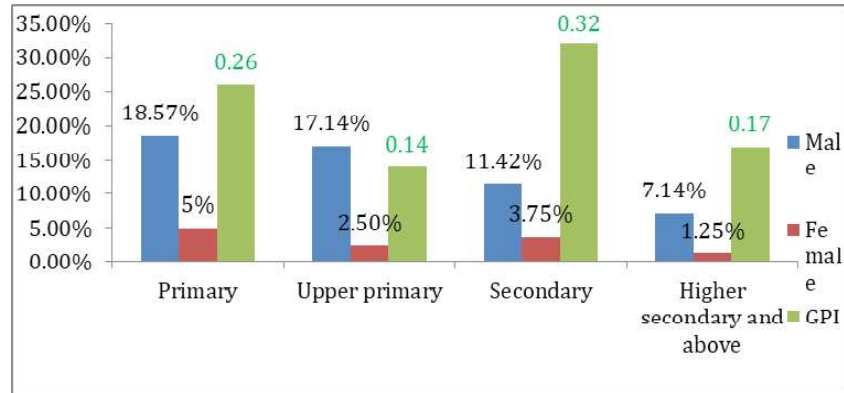


Figure 5: Level of Education and GPI in the age group of 24-60 years

Source: Primary data

Figure -3, 4 and 5 shows different Level of Education and GPI across age groups. Figure-3 depicts that at primary level female literacy rate is more than male literacy rate but, at upper primary level male literacy rate is more than female literacy rate. It is clear that, the value of GPI at upper primary education is less than 1. Figure 4 and 5 states that there is a wide gender disparity in education at secondary level of education in 15-23 years and 24-60 years age groups.

Table 6: Level of Education of individuals aged above 5 and GPI across age groups

Level of Education	6-14 years GPI	15-23 years GPI	24-60 years GPI
Primary	1.28	1.6	0.26
Upper primary	0.75	1.33	0.14
Secondary	-	0.28	0.32
Higher secondary and above	-	0.45	0.17

Source: Primary data

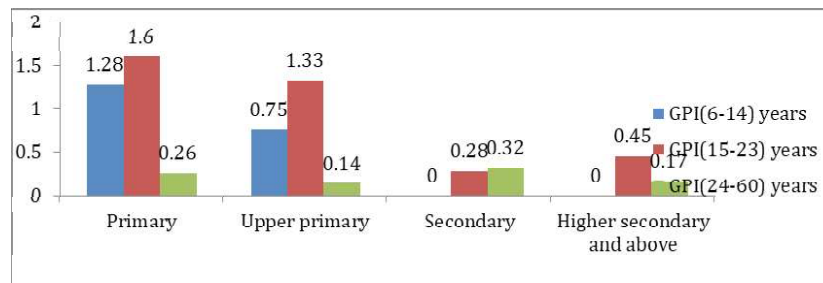


Figure 6: Level of Education and GPI across age groups

Source: Primary data

The above information indicates the Gender Parity Index across age groups at different levels of education. If we will compare GPI at different levels of education and across age groups then, we found that, the value of GPI is very low (0.14) in the age bracket of 24-60 years at upper primary level means a disparity in favour of males. The value of GPI is high (1.6) for the age group 15-23 years at primary level indicating disparity in favour of females. GPI is greater than 1 both for the age group 15-23 years and 6-14 years, at primary level indicating disparity in favour of females. But at secondary and higher secondary level, the value of GPI is less than 1 across all age groups indicating a higher gender disparity at higher levels of education.

Dropout Rate

Another dimension of gender disparity in education is dropout rate. It refers to the number of students who leave school before completing their education.

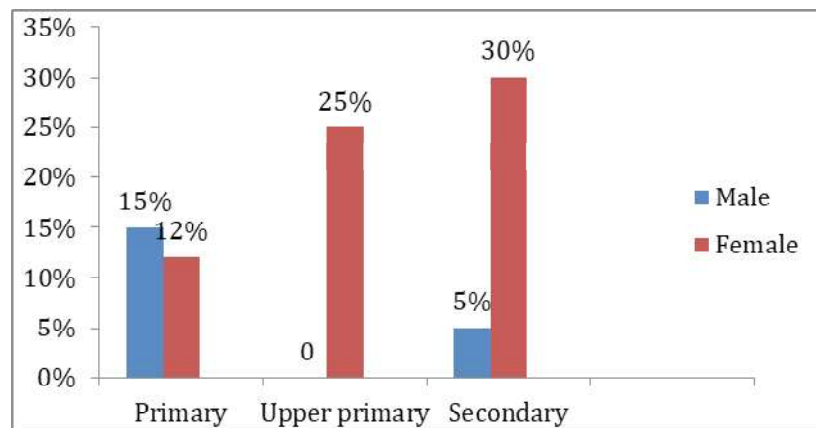


Figure 7: Dropout rate at different levels of education

Source: Primary data

It is observed from the figure that at primary level, male drop out is more than female dropout. But at upper primary level, female dropout rate is 25% and male dropout rate is zero. It is a matter of worry that, dropout rate of female is acute at secondary level.

Challenges of Gender Equality in Education

Our findings reveal that girls and young women still face huge barriers to access education. As stated by the parents the poor socioeconomic condition was mainly responsible for dropout of their children. Due to poverty they were unable to afford desired level of education to their children. The parents were of the view that girls need not be provided

education as par with the boys. Only one parent reported that due to health problem one of their children was unable to complete the basic level of education. Parents admitted that their illiteracy and ignorance about the value of education creates a hurdle in the path of their children's education. Parents also admitted that they were withdrawn their male child from the school before completing the basic cycle of education because they thought that higher education does not guarantee employment. Hence, these people prefer to send their children to work so that they can earn some bucks for the family from the childhood which will be benefited to their family in the future. Similarly girl child were withdrawn so that they can release their mother from the household chores. Other reasons for not accessing higher education as stated by parents are lack of proper sanitation facilities (Girls especially during menstruation face difficulties to attend the school), behavior of the teacher, lack of female teachers, language barriers.

From the above discussion it is clear that the major challenge for disparity in education in the study area are:

- Financial constraints
- Negative attitude of parents towards girl's education
- Illiteracy and ignorance
- Lack of proper sanitation facilities
- Behaviour of the teacher
- Lack of female teachers
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Language barriers
- Sociocultural expectations to prioritize household responsibilities over education

MAJOR FINDINGS

- Our findings reveals that 37.5 percent girls in the age group(1-5) year are not attending any educational institution(Table no- 2)
- Half of the total population in Tenda village are illiterate and the gap in male female literacy rate stands at 29.5 percent which is very high (Figure no- 1 and 2).
- Data depicts that people in the age group of 60 and above are 100 percent are illiterate, 68 percent and 27.98 percent people in the age group of 24-60 and 15-23 respectively are illiterate(Table no-4).
- Our study reveals that population in the age group of 15-23 year have obtained highest level of secondary education and population in the age group of 15-23 and 24-60 have obtained lowest level of higher secondary education (Table 4).

- We found that Gross Enrolment Ratio at higher secondary level is totally unsatisfactory for females. If we look Gender parity Index at different levels of education, we observed that except at primary level, GPI at different levels of education is unfavourable to females (Table no-5).
- Our findings also reveals that the value of GPI is very low (0.14) in the age bracket of 24-60 years at upper primary level and high (1.6) at primary level in the age group of 15-23 years. We also found that at higher levels of education the value of GPI is less than 1 across all age groups(Figure no-6)
- One of the prominent finding of our study is that, the dropout rate of females at upper primary and secondary level stands at 25 percent and 30 percent respectively.(Figure no – 7).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Despite numerous provisions and efforts by the Government, there persists a significant gender gap in education. Hence, addressing gender disparity in education requires a comprehensive approach, involving proper implementation of educational policies, providing financial support in higher education, counselling services to parents and children regarding value of education, more participation especially weaker sections in the society in the prevailing education system, increasing awareness activities in the remote areas, increasing the volume of investment in girls education, fostering collaboration among all students, providing proper sanitation facilities, appointment of more female teachers and language teacher, reviewing and updating the school curricula as per the need of contemporary era. To achieve the goal of **Education for All**, it is therefore, imperative to change societal attitudes towards girl's education . Failure to do so will perpetuate the illusion of gender equality in education, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

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