

# **Lifelong Learning, Ethical Concerns, and Social Justice in Mayurbhanj District amongst Tribal Adolescent Girls**

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## **Abstract**

Lifelong learning is one of the principles of inclusive and sustainable development. Still, however, one can find a discrepancy of access to the ongoing learning opportunities, particularly among tribal adolescent girls who live in marginalised regions. The paper addresses the social justice issues and ethical concerns of the lifelong learning of tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha state. Disadvantages to the continuation of education and empowerment are structural inequalities, gender discrimination, socio-cultural barriers, poverty, and insufficient institutional support. According to the paper, lifelong learning cannot be understood as an attempt to provide access to formal education, but as a just input to social, cultural, and economic development. It concludes with a policy recommendation to make tribal girls empowering and ethical in education. The design of the research will be a mixed-method design, which will be accommodated by surveys, interviews, and field observations in order to understand the lived experiences of tribal adolescent girls and the challenges they encounter in the process of seeking access to lifelong learning opportunities. The findings demonstrate that lifelong learning should not be limited to formal learning but should include non-formal, community-based, and culturally relevant learning activities. There must exist moral and socially fair educational practices that enable inclusion, gender equality and empowerment.

**Keywords:** Lifelong Learning, Inclusive Education, Sustainable Development, Ethical issues in Education, Social Justice

## **1.Introduction**

Lifelong learning has become a core principle that has been identified as a major principle to inclusive and sustainable development. It can be defined as an ongoing process of learning, developing, and maintaining some knowledge, skills and values during the life of a person in the formal, non-formal and informal environments (UNSECO-2025) Lifelong learning in modern development is associated with social justice, empowerment, and fair access to opportunities. It is very important as it helps individuals to adjust to social, economic, and cultural transformations as well as enhance their living standards. Nevertheless, UNSECO Dgital Library (2025) lifelong learning opportunities are unevenly distributed, especially among the marginalised communities, even though their importance is crucial.

The tribal adolescent girls in remote and socio-economically marginalised areas hold some of the most disadvantaged groups by Asim Mahat in (2025), SCOON on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023 published the report. This has led to a situation where tribal adolescent girls are usually deprived of continuous education, educational mobility, and skills development and empowerment. They do not only influence their personal development, but also sustain poverty and social exclusion cycles.

Many of these issues are represented in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha that has a large population of tribals. Despite the different educational policies and programmes that ensure inclusions and gender equality in education, there are still gaps that need to be filled in providing equity to tribal girls to access lifelong learning. This is not just a question of access to formal schooling but it is also a question of providing opportunities to engage in life long learning which is culturally sensitive, socially fair, and empowering. Lifelong learning thus needs to be perceived as a more inclusive model, which includes formal education with non-formal, community-based and culturally responsive learning practices.

## **2. Social Justice Issues in Tribal Girls' Education**

The social justice issues and ethical concern regarding lifelong learning of tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha are reviewed in this paper. It discusses the structural and socio-cultural obstacles, which obstruct their continuity and empowerment in education. Another significant point that the study makes is that lifelong learning should not be viewed as an educational chance but rather as an essential contribution to the social, cultural as well as economic growth. In solving these issues, the paper aims to add to the discussion of inclusive education and gender equity Tanveer Ahmad Khan et al (2024)

The study will be based on the mixed-method research approach to gain insights into the real-life experiences that tribal adolescent girls have to undergo and the challenges they have to face. The data collection will be carried out based on the data of surveys, interviews, and field observation that will allow obtaining interconnected knowledge on quantitative trends and qualitative experiences. The study will focus on listening to the girls themselves and understanding their opinions and views, as well as interpreting the institutional and social influences that influence the learning opportunities they have.

## **3. Lifelong Learning and Inclusive Sustainable Development**

Lifelong learning is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values during a lifetime of an individual. It does not only constitute formal learning in learning institutions or universities but also non-formal and informal learning experiences that people come across in families, community, workplace, and the socially constructed environments. Lifelong learning helps a person to adjust to changes in the social, cultural, and economic aspects along with enhancing the quality of life and personal development.

Lifelong learning is very important in inclusion, empowerment, and equal opportunities involving marginalized communities and, in this case, tribal adolescent girls. It offers learning flexibility that can eliminate the hindrances like poverty, gender discrimination, geographical isolation, and lack of access to formal education. The educational programs that are culturally relevant and community-based contribute to the factor that makes education more accessible and meaningful to the tribal girls. Lifelong learning, therefore, is not only an educational opportunity, but a major tool to create social justice, gender equality and sustainable development. Constant education in the lifelong cycle can help the society to make people active participants in social and economic life and reach their potential.

## **Review literature**

Lifelong learning is a subject of importance in the recent studies that have expressed lifelong learning as a tool of promoting social justice, gender equality and inclusive development. Mancas and Braguta (2025) after the interpretation of the existing the literature planning and adult education in (2025) reviewed the importance of continuous education as one of the main tools of sustainable development, social equity, and inclusion and also said that education is not only limited to formal schooling but should be considered as a lifelong process through which individuals and communities could adjust to the changes in the social, economic, and environmental settings. The studies emphasize that lifelong learning opportunities should be provided equally to everyone to minimize structural inequality including poverty, gender discrimination, and social exclusion, and enhance the employability, civic engagement, and social mobility of the marginalized population. On the same note, in his study, Jena (2024) investigated the awareness regarding menstruation in Ho tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj district and concluded that despite some form of knowledge in relation to menstruation, it is usually not complete and is often influenced by socio-cultural beliefs and myths. The researchers found out that most of the girls were informed by mothers, relatives or peers and not by educational systems or health people and therefore they are aware of very little information and in some cases are negative about menstruation health and hence there is need to create better educational and health awareness programmes to the tribal adolescents. Another important contribution was made by the author of the study, which is referred to as the equal gender opportunities, was made by the authors in the work, which was published in (2014) by Valenzuela Persico (2014): the author stated that the lifelong learning must also receive acknowledgment as the process that promotes the social participation and gender equality, in addition to being aware of learning as an educational process. The study highlights the idea that social justice in education involves having equal access to learning opportunities in life, particularly to the disadvantaged in society (women, girls, and ethnic minorities) Kretchmar, Jennifer in (2023). The paper also pinpoint gender inequality, poverty, and insufficient institutional support as some of the biggest obstacles that deny women and girls the opportunity to access education, jobs, and social life, and thus emphasizes the importance of the lifelong learning policies to focus on these structural disparities and empower the disadvantaged communities. Collectively, these studies highlight the importance of inclusive and equitable lifelong learning systems in ensuring the attainment of social justice, gender equality and sustainable development, especially amongst vulnerable members of society such as tribal adolescent girls.

## **1.Research objectives**

- 1.To identify barriers to lifelong learning among tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj district.
- 2.To examine social justice and ethical issues in promoting inclusive and empowering education for tribal girls.

## **5.Research Questions**

1. What are the major barriers to lifelong learning faced by tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj district?
2. How can social justice and ethical educational practices promote inclusive and empowering learning opportunities for tribal girls?

## 6. Research Methodology

The current work has a mixed-method research design, because the proposed study aims to investigate the lifelong learning, ethical issues and social justice among tribal adolescent girls in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The studies has been around four blocks of the Mayurbhanj district, that is, Tiring, Jamada, Bahalada, and Rairangpur, in which tribal communities are seriously concentrated in the table No-1 The respondents were a total of 120 tribal adolescent girls with the age range of 10-19 years who were selected by using purposive sampling. The research involves only female participants due to the need to comprehend the exact educational issues and obstacles that tribal girls endure in gaining lifelong learning opportunities. The collection of data was done by use of structured questionnaires, semi structured interviews, and field observations to ensure both quantitative data and qualitative data were captured concerning the lived experience. The data obtained were analysed by following the methods of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to investigate the barriers, ethical consideration, and social justice concerns of lifelong learning among tribal adolescent girls.

Table No:1. Research methodology

| Component                      | Description                                                                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Research Design</b>         | Mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods.                  |
| <b>Study Area</b>              | Four blocks of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha – Tiring, Jamada, Bahalada, and Rairangpur. |
| <b>Target Group</b>            | Tribal adolescent girls (female only).                                                 |
| <b>Age Group</b>               | 10–19 years.                                                                           |
| <b>Sample Size</b>             | 120 tribal female respondents selected from the four blocks.                           |
| <b>Sampling Method</b>         | Purposive sampling.                                                                    |
| <b>Data Collection Methods</b> | Surveys, semi-structured interviews, and field observations.                           |
| <b>Data Analysis</b>           | Descriptive statistical analysis and thematic analysis.                                |

## 7. Observation of research

Overall Finding: The study reveals that tribal adolescent girls in Mayurbhanj face structural, socio-economic, and gender-related barriers to lifelong learning, highlighting the need for inclusive and culturally relevant educational interventions interpretation has been shown in table No-2 Represent the Summery of the finding of present research

Table:2. Summary of Key Findings

| Aspect Studied      | Observation                                                                      | Statistical Result             | Interpretation                         |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Sample Distribution | 120 tribal adolescent girls selected from four blocks (Tiring, Jamada, Bahalada, | Mean = 30, Median = 30, SD = 0 | Equal representation across all blocks |

|                                  |                                                                                 |                                      |                                                        |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  | Rairangpur), 30 from each block                                                 |                                      |                                                        |
| Access to Lifelong Learning      | Many girls have limited access to continuous learning opportunities             | Descriptive observation              | Educational access is restricted in tribal areas       |
| Socio-economic Barriers          | Poverty and lack of educational resources affect participation                  | Field observation & survey responses | Economic conditions influence educational continuation |
| Gender and Cultural Factors      | Household responsibilities and gender norms limit girls' learning opportunities | Interview findings                   | Gender inequality impacts lifelong learning            |
| Community Learning Opportunities | Non-formal and community-based learning support girls' empowerment              | Qualitative findings                 | Alternative learning systems are important             |
| Block Comparison                 | ANOVA analysis conducted across four blocks                                     | $F = 0.00, p = 0.50 (>0.05)$         | No significant difference among the blocks             |

## 8. Interpretation of Statistical Results

The comparative analysis reveals that the four blocks had equal sample representation thus balanced representation. The results indicate that tribal adolescent girls are underprivileged of the lifelong learning opportunities because of limited educational opportunities. Poverty and shortage of facilities are some of the social-economic factors that substantially influence their involvement in education is represent the table No-3 Bellow, Also, the role of girls in the household is dictated by gender roles and cultural beliefs and thus provides them with even less room in learning. Community-based and non-formal learning programs however offer some empowerment and skills development support. As ANOVA results indicate ( $F = 0.00, p = 0.50, p > 0.05$ ), the differences between the four blocks are not statistically significant, which means that the obstacles of lifelong learning are not different in the entire research area.

Table No-3. Interpretation of Statistical Results

| Aspect Studied      | Sample / Observation                                                                                             | Statistical Analysis           | Result                          | Interpretation                                          |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Sample Distribution | 120 tribal adolescent girls selected from four blocks (Tiring, Jamada, Bahalada, Rairangpur); 30 from each block | Mean = 30, Median = 30, SD = 0 | Equal sample size across blocks | Ensures balanced representation and reliable comparison |

|                                  |                                                                      |                                              |                                         |                                                               |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Access to Lifelong Learning      | Many girls have limited access to continuous education opportunities | Descriptive statistics and field observation | Low availability of learning resources  | Lifelong learning opportunities are limited in tribal regions |
| Socio-economic Barriers          | Poverty, lack of school facilities, and financial constraints        | Survey responses and qualitative analysis    | High influence of economic hardship     | Socio-economic conditions reduce educational participation    |
| Gender and Cultural Factors      | Household work, early responsibilities, and social norms             | Interview-based qualitative findings         | Strong gender-based constraints         | Gender inequality restricts girls' learning continuity        |
| Community Learning Opportunities | Presence of non-formal education and community learning programs     | Qualitative analysis                         | Positive impact on skill development    | Community initiatives support empowerment and education       |
| Block Comparison                 | Comparative analysis across four blocks                              | ANOVA: $F = 0.00$ , $p = 0.50$ ( $>0.05$ )   | No statistically significant difference | Educational challenges are similar across all blocks          |

## 9. Conclusion

Lifelong learning is a core value to inclusive and sustainable development, which stresses on constant learning, cultivation of knowledge, skills, and values in formal, non-formal and informal environments. In the case of marginalized communities, above all, adolescent girls of the tribes living in remote places such as Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, lifelong learning access is highly restricted by socio-economic factors, gender roles, cultural factors, and geographical seclusion. The problems not only retard the development of the individual, but also reproduce the cycle of poverty and social exclusion.

The paper points out that although formal educational policies and programs are designed to enhance inclusion and gender equality, there is still much room to improve the equitable access to learning opportunities. Informal, community-based, and culturally competent learning programs become the critical elements to empower tribal girls, to build on skills development and to give them meaningful learning experiences. This lifelong learning is not just a learning opportunity but it plays a decisive role in enhancing social justice, gender equality and empowerment as well as sustainable development. Culturally sensitive and accessible lifelong learning can see tribal girls transcend structural and socio-cultural obstacles to empower them to engage in social, economic and cultural life to the full extent and hence growth in the wider society.

## References

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