

Political Socialization of Girls through Education of an Indian University: A Case Study of Utkal University, Odisha

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ABSTRACT

More than six decades after Independence, women's education in India has remained largely neglected. Education, being a factor of modernization and empowerment, needs to receive due emphasis and attention. It is not enough that a good policy is made. It is more important to ensure that this policy is implemented. In our country, there has been a big failure in putting to policies and programmers on women's education. Further, educational institutions help in building personality and shaping the orientations, ideas and beliefs of individuals. In this respect, institutions of higher education have a special responsibility. Healthy and innovative socialization in Colleges and Universities would better prepare women to successfully face challenges of life and play their roles in the society as well as state. The main objective of this study is to find out how much the girl students in higher educational institutions learn about the way they would have to face different challenges of life and successfully play the roles assigned to them at different steps of life. Does this socialization help them make right choices about their academic career, professional life and life partner? Does it contribute to their social and political efficacy? The study has thrown light on these aspects. The methodology applied for the study is both empirical and analytical. The study was conducted in the Utkal University, Vani Vihar, which was established in 1943. It consists of 27 post graduate departments and 16 Sponsored Courses. The student's strength is around 3,000 out which girl students number is 1,208. Over the years, the number of girls' students has considerably increased. This indicates increasing interest of the society in women's education. Unlike at the lower level, the dropout rate of girls' students in the University is quite low. This is also a positive development for women's education. The sample consists of 120 girls selected from different Post Graduate departments of the University. Data were collected through a questionnaire.

Keywords: Political Socialization; Education; Empowerment; Drop-out; Humanity; Human development; Personality

INTRODUCTION

In the era of scientific enquiry for political knowledge, the concept of political socialization has been acquiring gradually, a special importance as a device for understanding people's orientations to the political ideas and Issues within their political system. Orientation is usually regarded as the pattern of outlook of an individual which helps him in sorting out, emphasizing and evaluating the stimuli coming from the world around him and is more important than his attitudes or opinion. Individual's outlooks may be either general in nature or focused on a limited aspect of his surroundings. Ultimately this outlook pattern or aggregate of political orientations becomes a political culture [1]. Political socialization is a lifelong process by which people form their ideas about politics and acquire political values. The family,

educational system, peer groups, and the mass media all play a role. While family and school are important early in life, what our peers think and what we read in the newspaper and see on television have more influence on our political attitudes as adults. Our first political ideas are shaped within the family. Parents seldom "talk politics" with their young children directly, but casual remarks made around the dinner table or while helping with homework can have an impact. Family tradition is particularly a factor in party identification, as indicated by the phrases lifelong communist and lifelong congress man. The family may be losing its power as an agent of socialization, however, as institutions take over more of child care and parents perform less of it. Children are introduced to elections and voting when they choose class officers and the more sophisticated elections in high school and college teach the rudiments of campaigning. Political facts are learned through

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courses in American history and government, and schools, at their best, encourage students to critically examine government institutions. Schools themselves are involved in politics; issues such as curriculum reform, funding, and government support for private schools often spark a debate that involves students, teachers, parents, and the larger community..

The attitudes and orientations towards politics may be value oriented or value free in a political system. Political behaviour is governed by values and norms. Political behaviour of human race "has to be understood not only from the analyst's frame of reference but from the political actor's own frame of" [2]. Thus, it is inevitably true that a normative political system may be build up with the value oriented political attitudes only if the political actors wish to act in that direction. Although peer pressure certainly affects teenagers' lifestyles, it is less evident in developing their political values. Later, if peers are defined in terms of occupation, then the group does exert an influence on how its members think politically. For example, professionals such as teachers or bankers often have similar political opinions, particularly on matters related to their careers. Much of our political information comes from the mass media: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. The amount of time the average An average Indian family today watches TV, makes it the dominant information source, particularly with the expansion of 24-hour all-news cable channels [3]. Not only does television help shape public opinion by providing news and analysis, but its entertainment programming addresses important contemporary issues that are in the political arena, such as drug use, abortion, and crime. The growth of the Internet is also significant; not only do essentially all-news outlets have their own Web sites, but online bloggers present a broad range of political opinion, information, and analysis.

The political socialization among university students is not carried out in vacuum, instead, it is realized by mutual communication with social environment, and it is also influenced and restricted by social reality. In today's world, progress of globalization is accelerated constantly. Leslie Skair, [4] a British socialist, has given an authoritative definition to globalization. That is, globalization is centered on economic globalization, including the basic contents of communication, ecology as well as tourism. It is a social change trend with cultural and social political influence as its direct consequence. Based on economy and technology, globalization is a comprehensive multi-level historical progress, which relates to economy, politics and culture and so on, promoting a huge change on various aspects of social life. Political socialization of university students under the new age should be related to current international environment, and it should also be related to Odisha's internal social economic, political and cultural situations with respect of national condition. That is, at present, Odisha is under a comprehensive social transition period with sharp development and change, which has provided opportunities as well as challenges for political socialization of university students. In order to relieve the negative effect on university students' political socialization by globalization and social transition, the progress of political socialization among university students should be promoted vigorously so that advocated socialist politics and culture can be accepted in a most extensive range.

Marx once said that human is an inborn social animal in any case even if he is not inborn political animal as Aristotle said. Human is inborn social animal, and he becomes inborn political animal after entering political society. Human is social animal means that

human can only realize his nature after being socialized in the society. Likewise, only in political society, human can become a qualified political citizen with political nature by accepting political education and experiencing political socialization. If socialization is seen as the key of turning human into social man biologically, then political socialization is a necessary way to turning social human into political one. From the perspective of individual, political socialization is a continuous process for social members' political growth and development, including formation and promotion of political characteristic and capability. During the political socialization of college students, students are form particular political characteristic as well as particular political psychology and ideas by acquiring particular political knowledge from families, schools and social education. Besides, college students' understanding and mastery of political life rules, skills and qualities is the process of forming and promoting their political capabilities. All of these activities are promoted, implemented and enforced by political socialization.

Utkal University, known as the mother university in the State, has a distinguished history. It has contributed immensely to the development of modern Odisha. The university has been served by many illustrious faculties. Its notable achievements in academics and research helped the university carving a distinct identity for itself. Girl students' communities in Utkal University constitute a sizeable majority of the intelligentsia, yet little is known about their political socialization. An investigation on how political socialization takes place among girls within a university setting is crucial since academic communities are also key participants in the political system of the state as well as the nation. In this context, it is essential to understand how young girls in universities, such as Utkal, are politically socialized and the implications thereof on their political behaviour and participation.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The fundamental problem in this study is:

1. Who are the key and decisive agents of political socialization of girl students in a higher education set up like Utkal University?
2. What role do they play in political socialization and what impact do they have on the political behaviour of girl students in the university?

Thus, in this study the focus is on the agents of political socialization and their role in the political socialization of girl students in Utkal University. Furthermore, the study focuses on the impact of political socialization on the residents' political behaviour. In the study, attention will be paid to political socialization in general, but particularly to girl students' political socialization.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are the following:

1. The first objective is to determine who and what the agents of political socialization are within the campus of Utkal University?
2. The second objective is to determine the role of each agent in the political socialization of girl students of Utkal University, as well as the factors that might affect the role of these agents.
3. The third objective is to determine what the outcomes of the political socialization process are in terms of girl students' political values, orientations and attitudes, political knowledge and expectations, political behaviour and particularly political participation.

KEY CONCEPTS

Clarity on the following key concepts used in the study is at this stage necessary in order to eliminate ambiguity and misunderstanding. The concepts defined in this section only include those that would enable an understanding of the research design. Other concepts such as political efficacy and political awareness would be defined in the sections where they become relevant.

Agents of political socialization

Agents of political socialization are 'elements', such as groups and institutions that facilitate the development and transmission of political knowledge, values and attitudes, at both the individual and community levels, during the process of political socialization. They enable citizens or members of a society to acquire certain knowledge, values and attitudes of their political system and also educate them to participate within that political system. Agents of political socialization include for example, family, school, peers, political parties and the media [5-8].

Political attitudes

Political attitudes are a set of either positive or negative views on a political issue, events and personalities [9].

Political behaviour

Political behaviour refers to all political activities, or lack thereof, of citizens within a political system.

Political expectations

Political expectations refer to a strong hope or belief that a political situation or issue will happen or be the case.

Political information

Political information is facts that have to do with political issues such as elections, government, political parties, political candidates and campaigns [10].

Political knowledge

Political knowledge is the awareness and familiarity with a variety of political issues such as government institutions and processes, political parties, political leaders and the Constitution [11-12].

Political orientations

Political orientations are an integrated set of attitudes, values and beliefs regarding political issues which influence an individual's political behaviour [5,13].

Political participation

Political participation refers to actions by citizens by which they seek to make demands on government, influence and support government and its policies. It is behaviour such as voting, campaigning, demonstrating, rioting and signing of petitions [14-16].

Political socialization

Political socialization is a process through which people acquire political knowledge, values, attitudes and expectations relating to their political environment. It is a process by which people are inducted into a political culture. Political socialization is a continuous process which begins at childhood, and then it proceeds to adolescence and adulthood [17].

Political values

Political values are defined as citizens' overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship and society. They are citizens' all-encompassing basic rules and beliefs regarding political matters. Political values are enduring beliefs that a mode of conduct is preferable to another [18].

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study of political socialization has long been a major field of inquiry for political scientists. Studies of political socialization can be traced back to antiquity and to philosophers of politics and education such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and Jean Jacques Rousseau [1]. The above-mentioned scholars speculated about how individuals acquired politically relevant concepts, values and information, as well as how new members of a society were inducted into the political system. Although speculative in nature, their work provided crucial knowledge on political socialization [19].

Plato through his seminal work *The Republic* emphasized the importance of civic education and childhood experiences as the way of inculcating appropriate citizenship values. He pointed out that children could be socialized into good citizens through comprehensive government instructional or educational programmes. Plato argued that citizens' political values affected the stability and order of political institutions. Thus, he attributed the deterioration of politics to failures in political socialization. Similarly, Aristotle stressed the importance of political education in the stability of political structures. He explained that different political structures required different types of political values and predispositions [5,8].

Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, scholar, and advisor to the Chinese rulers, regarded political socialization important in the stability of the Chinese political system. His views differed from many of his contemporaries, particularly historians, who believed that the Chinese rulers should rule by using coercion and force. Confucius therefore advised various provincial rulers to train or educate their citizens rather than to try to control them by coercion and force. He believed that a well-regulated family was essential in creating political order. He explained that the love and respect that a child felt towards his or her parents would in later years extend to men in positions of political authority [8].

The importance of political socialization was also observed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He argued that childhood socialization was necessary for the stability and maintenance of the state. He was of the opinion that the foundation of social life was through political indoctrination of children. Rousseau believed that government should continuously teach and guide citizens so that there would be harmony and political stability [8].

Although the work of the above-mentioned ancient scholars provided important groundwork on political socialization, it is only recently that research has begun to change the speculative nature of their work into reliable understanding of what these phenomena actually entail. In addition to classical work by Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, there were also studies that were done in the early twentieth century by Charles Merriam and Theodore Newcomb. In the 1920s and 1930s, Charles Merriam conducted studies on American civic education. Merriam's work provided the impetus for the emergence of political studies of socialization and at the same time sought to further the practical

enterprise of civic education. His studies provided a point of departure for the relationship between political socialization and political regimes [20-22].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of the study stresses on qualitative aspects. It covers the research method, data collection and data processing and analysis.

Research Method

The research employed a focus study design using a qualitative approach. The reason for using a qualitative approach is that it is particularly suitable for studying complex social phenomena in a context of limited or no prior information, when the intention is to examine characteristics that distinguish individuals, groups or communities [23-25].

Research Findings

The findings are broadly presented in the following Table 1.

The media were the most important source of political information since majority respondents (97.5%) received political information from them. The extended family and peers (friends or colleagues) were the second most important source of political information. A total of 77.5% respondents received political information from extended family, and friends or colleagues. Political parties were the third most important source of political information as reported by 72.5% respondents. The local self govt. was the fourth most important source as expressed by 62.5% respondents. Of the respondents, 60% reported that they received political information from the peer groups and friends, making it the fifth most important source of political information.

On the role of socialization agents, the media were regarded as the leading socialization agent, followed by the immediate family, peers, extended family, political parties, local municipality, school, traditional leadership, ward committee and religious institutions. The media, immediate family, peers, extended family and political parties were recognized as the principal agents, while the local municipality, school, traditional leadership, ward committee and church were regarded as the secondary agents. The data indicate that the influence of these agents differed regarding their role in the dissemination of political information, formation of political orientations as well as on political participation. In addition, the influence of these agents depended on how they were ranked as socialisation agents by the respondents.

What is also important about the findings is that for some socialization agents, their significance as sources of political information was not equivalent to their overall influence in the socialization process. On the one hand, some agents occupied higher positions as sources of political information and on the other they were ranked lower on their socialization influence. For example, the extended family was initially identified as the second most important source political information, yet it was ranked or regarded as the fourth most influential agent. The immediate family was initially identified as the fifth most important source of political information, although it was ranked or regarded as the second most influential agent. However, there are some agents which remained consistent. For example, the media were identified as the most important source of political information and they were also ranked as the most influential agent. Traditional leadership was identified as the seventh most important source of political information and it was also ranked as such on political influence.

What emerges from the study is that the socialization agents influenced the political socialization mainly through direct socialization and to a lesser extent via indirect action. During direct socialization, the respondents were politically socialized through political discussion, direct teaching, training, imitation and motivation. The agents performed indirect socialization through, for example, extracurricular activities. The study revealed that the role of political socialization agents was affected by factors such as age, gender, education, employment status, geographical location and access to basic services. This means that the manner in which the respondents were politically socialized was influenced by age, gender, education, employment status, geographical location and access to basic services. For example, on the issue of age it was found that young girls displayed higher levels of political interest, efficacy, knowledge, awareness and participation. Issues such as geographical location and access to basic services also affected the respondents' access to forms of media such as newspapers and the internet.

It was also found that the political socialization process had an impact on the respondents' political behaviour and participation. The socialization process produced different outcomes on the respondents' political interest, party identification, political beliefs, efficacy, knowledge, awareness and participation. On some variables, the socialization process had a strong effect and on others it was either moderate or weak. In some cases, the socialization process even produced inconsistent or conflicting outcomes. The socialization process had a moderate effect on political interest

Table 1. The findings are broadly presented in the following table.

S.NO	Source	Percentage
1	Media	97
2	Family	77
3	Friends	77
4	Political Parties	72
5	Local Self Bodies	62
6	Peer Groups	60
7	Religious Bodies	20
8	Leaders	16
9	Faculty	12
10	Staff	5
11	Others	1

and it had a strong impact on party identification, political beliefs, efficacy, awareness and participation. The impact on the socialization process on political knowledge was rather weak despite the fact that the respondents acquired political information from various agents. However, the study also revealed some anomalies between political efficacy and political interest. There was also inconsistency between political awareness and political interest.

The inconsistency between political efficacy and political interest was that there was high political efficacy, yet political interest was moderate. Generally, there is a close relationship between political efficacy and political interest and thus it would be expected that if one variable is high the other would also correspondingly be high. But in this study, it was not the case. The inconsistency between political awareness and political interest was that there was high political awareness, while political interest was moderate. Furthermore, the levels of political interest, party identification, political beliefs, efficacy, knowledge, awareness and participation varied in terms of the respondents' age. Girl students (21-26 years) displayed higher levels on most variables.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study are the following.

The first limitation of the study is its external validity. The study is a single case confined to Utkal University and therefore the findings are not generalizable to other communities located in different developmental, political and social contexts. The findings of this case study could be generalized to a theoretical proposition and not to a population or universe. Thus, the existing theory on political socialization can be used as a basis to compare the results of this study.

The second limitation is that the study was based on a restricted sample of 120 girl students of Utkal University. The size of the sample could lead to a sampling bias or discrepancy between the characteristics of the sample and the actual characteristics of the population. This implies that the findings may not be absolutely conclusive and thus are not generalizable to the whole academic community. It is worth noting that although the sample was limited, the researcher selected the respondents with characteristics that enabled him to collect useful and sufficient data to address the research problem.

The third limitation is the use of a lengthy questionnaire during the study. The length of the questionnaire affected the size of sample as well as the number of interviews that were conducted. However, the benefit of using such a lengthy questionnaire was the issue of completeness. The length of the questionnaire enabled the researcher to obtain sufficient and in-depth information to address all the research objectives.

SUGGESTIONS

Thus far, this study is one of the few that have been done on girl students' political socialization. It would be beneficial to conduct more studies on such political socialization with specific focus higher education institutions. More studies on youth's political socialization will help us to have a better understanding on how young adults develop their political orientations and how the socialization process affects their political behaviour and participation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has achieved what it set out to do. The study has provided valuable information on how girl students in Utkal University are politically socialized as well as how the

socialization process affects the students' political behaviour and participation. The study has made a major contribution to our understanding of girl students' political socialization, particularly within the higher education scenario pertaining to a university.

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