Chapter 2
ICT and Women Empowerment in a Rural Setting in India

Nirupama Prakash
Jaypee University of Information Technology (JUIT), India

ABSTRACT

The term "gender" is used to refer to behavioral differences between males and females that are culturally based and socially learned. Cultures differ widely in their norms and values regarding gender roles, the normative expectations concerning appropriately "masculine" or "feminine" behavior in a particular culture. The terms "male" and "female" are used for sex differences that are biological in origin, while the terms "masculine" and "feminine" refer to the corresponding culturally specific gender differences that are social in origin (Appelbaum & Chambliss, 1995).

GENDER AND SOCIETY

Global comparisons show that, by and large, societies do not consistently define most tasks as either feminine or masculine. With industrialization the importance of muscle power declines, so people have even more options and gender differences are further reduced. Thus, gender is simply too variable across cultures to be considered a simple expression of biology. Instead, as with many other elements of culture, what it means to be female and male is mostly a creation of society.

Considerable research points to the fact that young children tend to form single – sex play groups. Peer groups teach additional lessons about gender. Boys favor team sports with complex rules and clear objectives such as scoring a run or making a touchdown. Because such games nearly always have winners and losers, they reinforce masculine traits of aggression and control. Girls, too play team sports. But, girls also play hopscotch, jump rope, or simply talk, sing, or dance. These activities have few rules, and rarely is "victory" the ultimate goal. Instead of teaching girls to be

competitive, female peer groups promote the interpersonal skills of communication and cooperation, presumably the basis for girls' future roles as wives and mothers. Boys, reason according to abstract principles. For them, "rightness" amounts to "playing by the rules."

Girls, on the other hand, consider morality a matter of responsibility to others. Thus, the games we play offer important lessons for our later lives. (Macionis, J., 2006) Sexuality may refer to Sexuality (biology)/sex or Sexuality (gender)/gender identity. Gender identity is a person's own sense of identification as male or female. The term is intended to distinguish this psychological association, from physiological and sociological aspects of gender.

Culture is defined as way of life. Culture is divided in to material culture and non-material culture. Material culture includes innovations, products, Tools / technologies, ICTs whereas non-material culture refers to beliefs, values, customs, language common to a group. Norms are the agreed-upon expectations and rules by which a culture guides the behavior of its members in any given situation. Norms vary widely across cultural groups. Members of a culture must conform to its norms for the culture to exist and function (http://www.cliffsnotes.com/WileyCDA/CliffsReviewTopic/topicArticleId-26957, articleId-26853.html). According to the NCREL, "Cultural norms are behavior patterns that are typical of specific groups. Such behaviors are learned from parents, teachers, peers, and many others whose values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors take place in the context of their own organizational culture" (http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/drugfree/sa1lk2.htm).

SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GENDER-INDIAN CONTEXT

Indian culture is one of the most vibrant cultures in the world and rural culture is the backbone of Indian culture. Technology is rapidly changing the life styles and recent past has witnessed technological impact on rural India. However, urban-rural divide, rural poverty, education, gender disparity, maternal health and various cultural problems in rural India continue to be issues of concern. (Mondal, 2007)

In a recent study on "Maternal Health Situation in India-A Case Study", it has been pointed out that India has progressed rapidly on the socioeconomic front but progress in improvement of maternal health has been slow. The review of safe motherhood efforts in India shows that in spite of major initiatives taken by the government in last 10 years, even today nearly half of all deliveries take place at home and antenatal care services coverage is poor and maternal mortality ratio remains around 300. The challenge is how to make safe motherhood strategies in the future more successful. High priority needs to be given to safe motherhood and have policy and programs designed to implement evidence-based strategies and detailed micro-level program planning. The study highlighted that the main strategy for maternal mortality reduction of the government focuses on safe/institutional deliveries in the governmental and non-governmental sectors under National Rural Health Mission. Efforts to develop competencies needed for Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) in the entire cadre of staff nurses and ANMs are being undertaken. Regular training of select medical officers to administer anaesthesia has been taken up. Also multi skill training of medical officers, ANMs and paramedics is being initiated to close specialist skill gaps. Intensified IEC is to be pursued to ensure behavioural changes that relate to better maternal survival and women's health i.e. spacing, age at marriage, education of the girl child. (Vora, K.S.,Mavalnakar,D.V et al. 2008)

Many factors coalesce dramatically to make the position of women in Rajasthan a desperate one. Ancient traditions, religion, caste-based patriarchy, the economic effects of global capitalism combine with environmental stress factors make the way forward extremely complex. Patriarchy,

8 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/ict-women-empowerment-rural-setting/62872

Related Content

It's an M-World After All: Lessons from Global Patterns of Mobile Commerce
Nikhilesh Dholakia, Morten Raskand Ruby Roy Dholakia (2008). *Global Information Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 3604-3631).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/world-after-all/19201

Global Information Systems and Human Resource Management: A Research Agenda
Fred Niederman (2002). *Global Perspective of Information Technology Management (pp. 30-43).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/global-information-systems-human-resource/19272

ICT in Regional Development
Saundarjya Borboraand Mrinal Kanti Dutta (2008). *Global Information Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 351-358).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/ict-regional-development/18973

ICT for Digital Inclusion: A Study of Public Internet Kiosks in Mauritius
L.G. Pee, A. Kankanhalliand V.C.Y. On Show (2012). *International Comparisons of Information Communication Technologies: Advancing Applications (pp. 124-149).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/ict-digital-inclusion/61766

Pro-Environmental Behaviors and Environmental Improvement: What Information Do We Have Based on a Survey of the Young Generation?
Boqiang Linand Kai Wei (2023). *Journal of Global Information Management (pp. 1-21).*
www.irma-international.org/article/pro-environmental-behaviors-and-environmental-improvement/331089