

GENDER AND HOUSEHOLD HEALTH EXPENDITURE IN ORISSA

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ABSTRACT

Biologically determined sex and socially constructed gender have significant influence on the health and household health expenditures (HHE). From the gender and health literatures, three things are clear: most of the studies are macro in nature and based on secondary data; there is lack of research on the issues of gender and health and whatever researches existed are over emphasized female sex; and as health conditions are localized, there is a need for research on the micro aspects of gender and health. In this connection, the present paper is a modest attempt to study the gender (un)bias in the HHE based on primary data collected from four districts of Orissa, India by adopting multi-stage random sampling method. To substantiate the gender (un)bias in health expenditure, regression analysis is used and descriptive statistics are estimated. The result shows that there is a significant difference between average male and female HHE in rural, urban and combined areas but not in tribal area. A comparative study of influence of gender on HHE in rural and urban areas shows that the influence of male on the average HHE in rural area is more than in urban area where as the influence of female on it is higher in urban area. But a comparative study of influence of gender on HHE in rural urban and tribal areas shows that the influence of male and female on the average HHE is more in tribal area than rural and urban areas. To reduce the gender disparity in HHE a long-term and sustained improvements in women's and men's health is required. This may be brought out through expansion of education and economic opportunities among men and women. Moreover, a strong mental and attitudinal change in both men and women is essential.