

Topic-In a Rural School, the Parents' Presence and the Group's Gender and Sexual Violence

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Abstract:

In India, this study looks at parents' experiences with and involvement in gender and sexual assault prevention in a rural primary school context, where these crimes are still common. Within the framework of racialized disparities, socioeconomic exclusion, and gendered power hierarchies, the parents are black female carers who shoulder the weight of gendered impoverishment and are at the forefront of navigating their kids' safety in school. Three focus groups with fifteen parents whose children were enrolled in the primary school were used for data collecting. The study examined the interdependence of all matter within the assemblage of gender and sexual violence using a new feminist materialist analysis. The results showed that there was a spectrum of violence, including sexual harassment, grooming, and sexualized touching, from hallways to classrooms. The stories shared by the participants made clear the difficulties they had navigating institutional responses. Parents confront deficit-based narratives and demand accountability from educational authorities in spite of these obstacles. The study draws attention to the necessity of fostering cooperative partnerships between parents and schools in order to advocate for gender transition, justice, and care by elevating the voices of black rural women.

Keywords: Gender education, Sex education, Quality education, Primary education.

Introduction:

Certain risk factors that are supported and challenged in schools are reflected in gender and social norms in the home, which may normalize gender and male domination. In addition to having the ability to question gender and cultural conventions, parents are valuable allies in the fight against school-related violence. Rural families in India are shaped by labour migration as well as the lingering effects of social and economic inequality. Here, grandparents and extended family networks offer care for children who frequently grow up without their birth moms or fathers. In addition to bearing the brunt of gendered poverty, primary caregivers are on the front lines of responding to the disproportionately high rate of sexual assault that affects women and girls (Moletsane Citation 2018). What are their experiences in fostering relationships with the school to address gender and sexual violence prevention, as well as the steps they have taken? This paper's main focus is on this intricacy. The study's main goal is to pinpoint the intricate and contextual nature of their contacts with schools to avoid gender-based and sexual assault, as well as the tactics they use and the power dynamics that impede their attempts to provide safe settings for their kids.

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The study opposes this framing and advocates for attention to the socio-material, cultural, and contextual factors through which rural women negotiate their interactions with schools, given the lengthy history and radicalized stereotypes that form deficiency understandings of impoverished black rural women. This study focuses on how rural parents perceive the context of gender-based and sexual violence in schools, how they engage with the school to put an end to these kinds of incidents, and how social and cultural resources are used as “protective” tactics to promote gender violence prevention. In order for schools and parents to collaborate in combating gender and sexual violence, it is imperative that we address mothers’ and parents’ perspectives—a task that this study aims to accomplish.

A theoretical framework that considers how people, gender, cultural dynamics, violence, and the surrounding environment are entwined with power systems is necessary to address this complexity. It is feasible to comprehend parents’ capacities for action and the various ways in which those capacities are limited through this interweaving. The section that follows takes these theoretical findings into consideration.

Theoretical framing: gender and sexual violence as an assemblage:

In order to comprehend the ways in which parents engage with schools to pursue justice for their children, a theoretical framework that acknowledges the dynamic and co-extensive relationships between different actors, institutions, and materiality’s is necessary. By characterizing assemblages as “messy and entangled intermingling of bodies,” Wozolek (Citation2021, 64) draws attention to the way that violence is a result of these entanglements, resonating throughout environments where the primary targets of violence are frequently women and their subordination. The new feminist materialism is cited by Wozolek (Citation2021) and others (Fox and Alldred Citation2022) to explain the “knotted” and routine relationships in the day-to-day operations of power within the assemblage.

In this paper, the concept of assemblages serves as an analytical tool to capture the variety of entities and agencies—both human and non-human—that are involved in parents’ experiences and actions when they interact with the school to address the institutionalized power structures and avenues for promoting accountability and justice. Theoretically, this indicates that parents’ experiences are dynamic and comprise a variety of interactions with both human and non-human entities in the rural setting, such as the school environment, affects, ideas, cultural and gender norms, poverty, discourses, spaces and objects in the school setting, and institutional practices. Consequently, gender and sexual violence become less specific as the emphasis shifts away from human bodies.

According to Alldred and Fox Nick (Citation2015, 908), the abilities of bodies are dependent on the bodies of other people as well as non-human matter that generates effects inside an assembly that grants the ability to act. As a result, the assemblage is affectively formed, and the affective fluxes among different entities define “the capacities of individual bodies to do, feel, and desire” in relational ways. Put another way, as they are intertwined, affective flows intra-act to either limit or create options for doing, feeling, and desiring. For the sake of this work, this means that when the human and non-human components emerge within the assemblage, the parents’ capacities get intertwined, stabilized, changed, or inhibited depending on how the emotional flows are generated.

Importance of Gender Education:

Consequently, acknowledging the different capacities or potentials of bodies to act and be impacted is necessary to comprehend gender and sexual violence as well as parental efforts to lessen its effects, especially on girls. Feeling, embodied, and emplaced affects are also included in this. This indicates that the assemblage functions as a force where the local environment, affects, and embodiment come together. Affective flows generate power relations in assemblages that have the ability to organize preexisting power structures and disparities. Existing gendered hierarchies within the assemblage of gender and sexual

violence are rooted on the position and authority assigned to boys and men, and they are further reinforced by customs. Thus, the place-based framework of cultural norms, poverty, inequality, and the feelings of rage and frustration that spark affects and other bodies inside the assemblage intensify parents' experiences of the violence in schools and their actions when they talk about it. To put it another way, assemblage theorizing leaves open the possibility of action that both has the ability to strengthen the assemblage and current power relations and also to establish new ones.

The components of the assembly that could provide men and boys a greater status are held together by domains of customary norms and practices. Gendered expectancies and cultural norms are among the human and non-human variables that normalize masculine authority and the display of violence in the context of gender and sexual violence. This can be seen as a territorialization process of ordering, but the assemblage also offers possibilities for new becoming and is susceptible to de-territorialization, or the possibility of change and transformation. When parents discuss gender and sexual violence in schools, they do so within specific contexts marked by assemblages. These assemblages are involved in the processes of territorialization, de-territorialization (destabilization), and reterritorialization, which aim to establish stability and order.

Results:

The research presented in this study is based on three focus groups that involved fifteen parents from the school. Every focus group included five parents in it. Prospective participants were required to have kids enrolled in any primary school grade. As a relationship was built with the school in order to address teachers' and students' perspectives on gender and sexual assault, entry points to parents became possible. Consent forms were signed by parents who agreed to participate in the study after being informed about its goals. The parents were the primary caregivers, giving food, clothing, and making decisions on their kids' education on a daily basis. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, guaranteeing each participant's privacy and anonymity while promoting mutual trust amongst participants. The experiences of parents with gender and sexual violence at school, how it affected their children, and how they responded to it were the main topics of discussion. The types of violence, their interactions with teachers, and their involvement in addressing the violence in schools were among the specific questions that were asked. It was promised to the participants that they might omit questions and leave the interview at any time without giving a reason.

Conclusions:

The study emphasizes the interconnection of different actors, institutions, and materialities influencing parents' experiences and acts by conceptualizing gender and sexual violence as an assemblage. Everybody in the assemblage shapes the capacity to act and be affected, including human and non-human bodies. For black women living in rural poverty, this entails recognizing their ability to negotiate and oppose repressive systems within socio-material realities where class, gender, and race influence their experiences. Second, the assemblage shows how ritualized acts of sexual harassment and violence against girls mark their bodies territorially in schools, reflecting larger institutional and sociocultural processes that shape gender norms and power relationships.

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