

## **Absence of Secured Bathing Spaces and Its Effect on Women: An Exploratory Qualitative Study of Rural Odisha, India**

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**Abstract :** This is an exploratory qualitative study with an objective to understand the bathing practices followed by rural women and its consequences. Access to safe bathing spaces in rural India is a neglected issue due to which women are affected in various ways. Today, government policies are largely focused towards the building of toilets, but no importance has been given to the construction of bathrooms. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using in-depth interviews and focused group discussions with rural women in six villages of Odisha, India. The study was approved by an Institutional Research and Ethics Committee, and informed consent was taken from participants. For most of the participants, the access to water, bathing space and toilet was compromised posing various challenges in their daily lives. Women's daily schedule, hygiene practices, dignity, and health are greatly affected due to this lack. Since bathing in the open has been an ancient practice, the community's perception is benign towards the hardship of women. Lack of exposure to concealed bathing, necessary funds, and competing priorities are some of the household level factors which never let them think about having bathrooms and the lack of water supply, proper drainage system, subsidy or financial support are the governance and policy related factors which prevent their access to secured bathing spaces.

**Keywords :** bathrooms, dignity, exploratory, rural, qualitative, women's health, women

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