



Women

ISSN : 2394-0662

T H E P O W E R

A DOUBLE-BLIND PEER-REVIEWED ANNUAL BILINGUAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

3rd YEAR / VOL-III / YEAR-2025



PUBLISHED BY
WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTRE
NORTH LAKHIMPUR COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)

WOMEN THE POWER

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Dr. Ishmirekha Handique Konwar

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North Lakhimpur College (Autonomous)
ISSN : 2394-0662
Published in September, 2025

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‘Women the Power’ - the journal of Women's Studies Centre is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research on a wide range of topics related to gender, feminism and women studies. The aim of this journal is to provide a platform for scholars, researchers and activists to share their work and perspectives on issues related to women's lives, experiences and empowerment. The journal publishes original research articles that pertain and promote critical thinking and analysis of women's issues and experiences that would contribute to empowerment of women and help in establishing gender equality.

We hope this journal would contribute towards a deeper understanding of gender studies. The journal welcomes submission from scholars, academicians, practitioners and policy makers, and encourages submissions from diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

Editors

Dr. Ishmirekha Handique Konwar

Dr. Swapnali Gogoi

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Ecofeminism and Policy Innovation: The role of Women for Sustainable Governance

Dr. Richa Jain
Dr. Durdana Ovais
Mr. Pradeep Kumar Shrivastav

ABSTRACT

According to this research, women actively participate in the development and implementation of environmental policy. This paper highlights the deeper role that women play in the environmental field because she is one of the sustainable governments' key stakeholders. The study also emphasizes how ecofeminism and policy innovation are related. The study identifies gaps, major themes, patterns and trends using bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review. The results point to the importance of an ecofeminist framework in influencing environmental innovation and legislation, as well as the role that women play in sustainable governance and in influencing environmental policy.

Keywords: *Ecofeminism, Environment, Policies, Sustainability*

1.1 Introduction:

Women actively participate in the development and implementation of environmental policy, demonstrating their critical position in society. Women are becoming recognized as significant environmental stakeholders (Haq Z.A. et al., 2020). The quality of life for women is linked to sustainable behaviors (Natalis A. et al., 2025). Over the past 20 years, ecofeminist beliefs have shaped mainly modest legislative reforms related to environmental challenges and gender equality. The scope of revolutionary change has been constrained by the political and institutional frameworks that have been in existence during this time (Buckingham S., 2004). Environmental degradation poses a serious threat to women, especially those living in disadvantaged environments, as it restricts their access to natural resources that are necessary for existence (Husein S.; et al., 2021). Inadequate environmental laws, which are firmly anchored in anthropocentric ideals that put human convenience ahead of the environment, are the cause of the current ecological disaster. The efficacy of contemporary environmental law is limited by these viewpoints, notwithstanding governmental endeavors. Ecofeminism provides a viewpoint that respects and acknowledges the interdependence of nature and humans, thereby fostering a new human identity. Because of their biological and social functions, women have a deep link with nature. As such, their involvement in the legislative process is essential to ensure that environmental law is more inclusive and comprehensive (Natalis A. et al., 2023).

Although a number of studies have offered empirical support for various factors influencing ecofeminism and sustainable environmental policies, a thorough review of the literature is necessary to determine the direction of the study and to pinpoint the new elements that may offer a more compelling explanation of ecofeminism and the role of women in defining sustainable environmental policies.

In order to synthesize the literature on ecofeminism's determinants and sustainable environmental governance, we carried out a bibliometric review to summarize the field's development, direction, and trends. The research questions addressed by the study are as follows:

RQ1: What is the trend in publications over time and across regions?

RQ2: What are this body of knowledge's influencing factors with regard to articles, authors, and sources?

RQ3: What are the main themes and subjects covered in the literature, and what is the scope of the upcoming research?

1.2 Data and methodology:

1.2.1 Sample selection

First, the database is selected to identify the sample of articles to be included in the

review. We have maintained the coverage and quality of papers by using the Web of Science (WoS) citation database in addition to Scopus (Mongeon and Paul-Hus, 2016). The articles from both databases are then extracted using various keyword combinations, such as “ecofeminism” OR “eco-feminism” OR “feminist ecology” AND “policy” OR “governance” OR “regulation” OR “legislation” AND “innovation” OR “change” OR “development” OR “advancement...”

Third, we used the “English language” and “articles published after 2000” filters. There were 79 articles discovered in all as a result of the search. 78 appropriate papers were included for bibliometric analysis after the articles underwent full-text screening to determine their eligibility for the sample.

1.2.2 Analysis methods

According to Li et al. (2017), bibliometric citation analysis is used to map the knowledge anatomy of the literature base and highlight the main research themes and subjects. According to Denyer and Tranfield (2009), it aids in making conclusions and identifying research gaps.

The Biblioshiny package from R Studio and the VOSviewer software were used to apply publication trends, citation analysis, co-citation analysis, thematic analysis, and keyword analysis (Bahoo, 2020; Goyal and Kumar, 2021).

1.3 Data analysis and findings:

The data analysis is performed in three categories, descriptive analysis to provide an overview of the dataset, citation analysis to identify influential aspects of the literature and scientific mapping to locate intellectual structure, major disciplines, themes, emerging topics and collaborative structure of the literature base.

1.3.1 Descriptive analysis

1.3.1.1 Dataset

The dataset for this study includes 66 articles published on determinants of corporate credit rating from year 1993 to 2025. 66 documents are published in a total of 61 sources authored by a total of 119 authors having 256 keywords. Table 1 provides an overview of the dataset used for this study.

Table 1 Overview of the dataset

Description	Results
Timespan	1993:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	61
Documents	66
Average citations per doc	17.8
References	3463
Author's Keywords (DE)	256
Authors	119
Authors of single-authored docs	29
Single-authored docs	31
Co-Authors per Doc	1.88
International co-authorships %	13.64

1.3.1.2 Publication trend in time

The yearly scientific output of articles on the forces behind ecofeminism and sustainable governance from 1993 to 2025 is shown in Figure 1. Throughout the research period, annual publications have been on the rise, with 2024 seeing the highest number of papers. The figure illustrates how volume increased after 2007. Studies on ecofeminism and the role of women in defining sustainable policies have multiplied since 2017.

Figure 1 Annual scientific production of 66 articles from 1993-2025

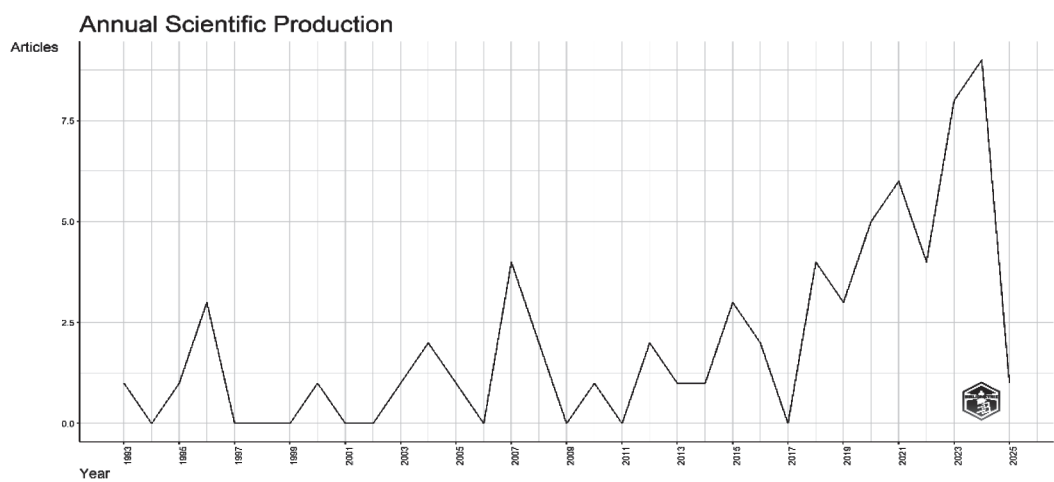


Table 2 Top countries: Number of publications and citations

Country's Scientific production		Most cited countries	
Country	Frequency	Country	Citation
USA	14	United Kingdom	363
Indonesia	12	Sweden	99
UK	10	USA	87
Canada	9	China	51
India	8	Israel	42
China	7	Australia	40
Australia	6	Spain	31
Spain	6	Ecuador	18
Germany	5	Bangladesh	16
Brazil	4	South Africa	15

1.3.1.3 Countries

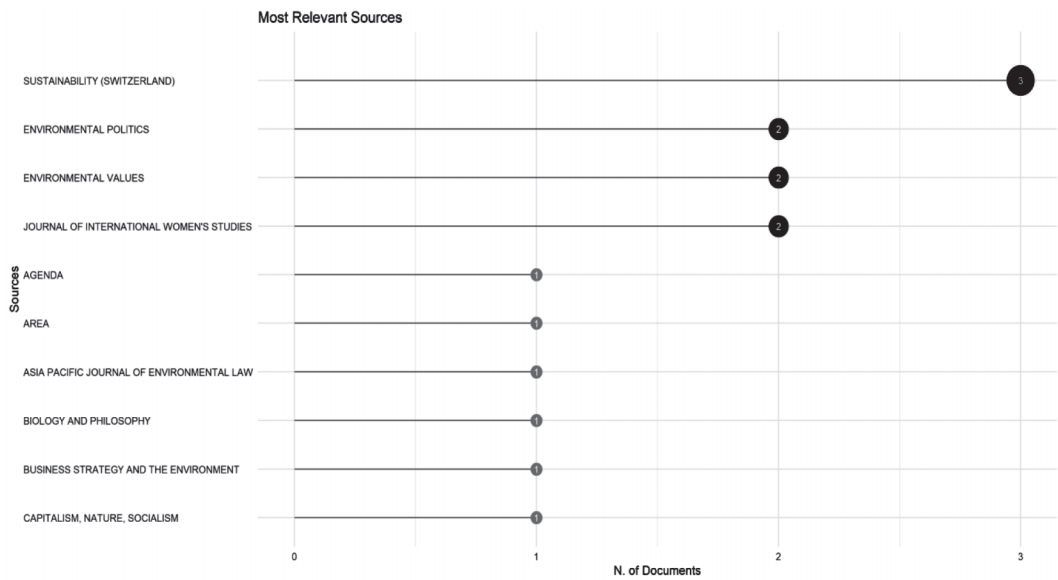
Countries' contributions are displayed in Table 2 according to the quantity of citations and published papers. Developed countries make up the majority of the 28 countries that have contributed to this field of study. Authors from the USA publish the most articles (14), followed by Indonesia (12), Malaysia (10), Canada (9), China (7), India (8), and Australia (6). The UK leads the list with 363 citations, followed by the USA and China, with Sweden coming in far behind with 99 citations.

1.3.2 Influential aspects of the literature

1.3.2.1 Journals

The most influential journals are shown in Figure 4 in order of h-index, which evaluates a journal's quality by considering both productivity and citation impact. It is seen as a more accurate indicator of a source's caliber and influence (Ingale and Paluri, 2020). The top 4 most impactful journals are Sustainability, Environmental Politics, Environmental Values and Journal of International Women's Studies.

Figure 4 Most impactful journals



1.3.2.2 Authors and affiliations

The 66 documents have 119 authors from 28 countries and are affiliated with 53 institutions. Table 3 depicts the most influential authors based on the number of published documents and their total number of global citations (TGC), i.e., the number of times a document is cited by other documents listed on the database used for the study. The highest number of documents are published by author Ament J (2), Buckingham S (2), Isla A (2), Natalis A (2) and Purwanti A (2).

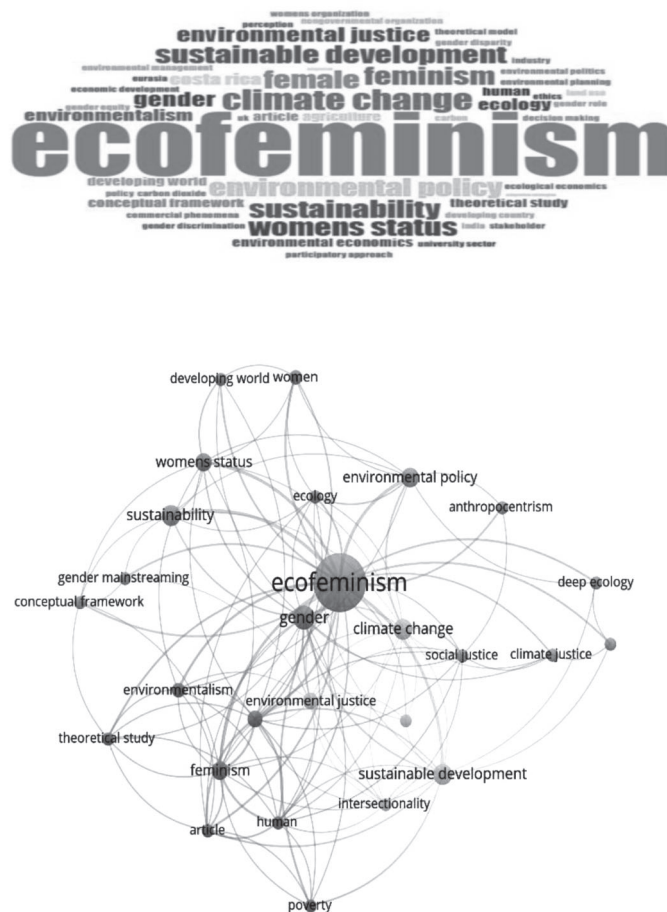
Table 3 Most Relevant Authors

Authors	Articles
Ament J	2
Buckingham S	2
Isla A	2
Natalis A	2
Purwanti A	2
Ahmad S	1
Ananthram S	1
Asmara T	1
Baruah B	1
Bellamy R	1

1.3.2.3 Keywords

Keywords analysis is performed to identify the most frequently occurring keywords, indicating the relevance of the word in the literature. Figure 5 shows the keywords dynamics presented through a word cloud where the size of a word corresponds to its frequency. The figure presents the top 40 most frequently used keywords. The term ‘ecofeminism’ appeared 22 times, followed by ‘climate change’ appeared 7 times, ‘environmental policy’, ‘female’ and ‘feminism’. This highlights the importance of these factors for the determination of sustainable governance. Apart from these, different governance variables like the sustainability, sustainable development, gender, are indicated by the word cloud.

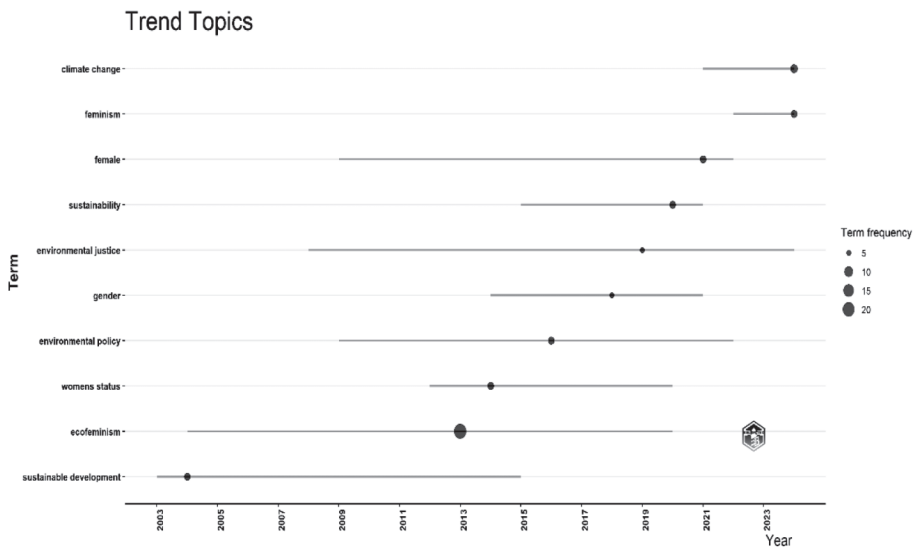
Figure 5 Keywords analysis



1.3.2.4 Trend Topics

According to the figure 6 mentioning trend topics – the most cited word is Ecofeminism as shown in the chart. It is the most popular word used by the researchers in their paper. After ecofeminism, another word creates buzz is climate change followed by environmental policy, female and women. These are the most trending words according to the researchers.

Figure 6 Trend Topics



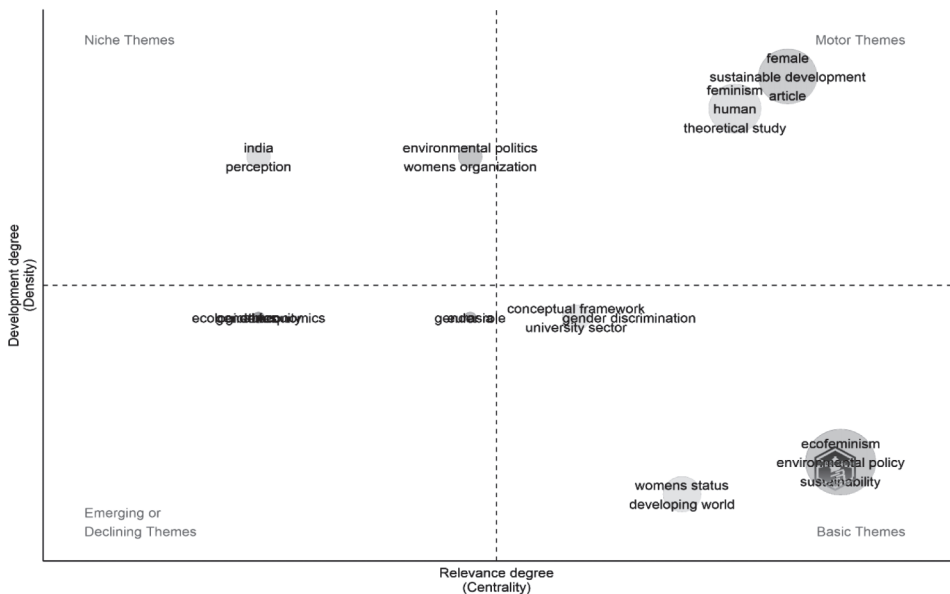
1.3.3 Conceptual structure

1.3.3.1 Thematic analysis

A research domain's many themes are displayed in the thematic map (Figure 8) according to the keyword clustering. Themes are arranged in four distinct quadrants of this two-dimensional map, with centrality (the theme's relevance) assessed on the horizontal axis and density (the theme's development) measured on the vertical axis. A bubble representing each theme is displayed, with the word with the highest frequency of occurrence serving as the bubble name. In the upper right corner, there are themes labeled "feminism," "sustainable development," "female," and "theoretical study," which indicate "motor themes," which are the most frequently discussed subjects. There are two distinct themes in the lower right quadrant: "ecofeminism," "environmental policy," "sustainability," "women's status," and "developing world." Other themes include "conceptual framework" and "gender discrimination." These point to the meaning of fundamental themes—themes that are significant yet

underdeveloped. These themes allow for additional study. Themes in the lower left quadrant are either growing or declining. Niche themes, which are distinct and well-developed concepts, are shown in the upper right quadrant. Some of the specialty subjects are “women’s organization,” “environmental politics,” and “India perception.”

Figure 7Thematic map



1.4. Future research agenda:

This study paves way for future research avenues for future research studies. Based on the study empirical case studies can be undertaken to validate the real-world impact of ecofeminist policies. Future research studies can also understand and explore the role of digital innovation and technology in enhancing women’s participation in sustainable governance.

1.5. Conclusion:

This study conducted using systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis give a comprehensive examination of the evolving academic landscape on ecofeminism and policy innovation. The main focus of the study has been on the role of women in sustainable environmental governance. The analysis was conducted on 78 peer-reviewed articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases. The analysis reveals a

steady rise in scholarly output, particularly after 2017. This indicates a growing recognition of women's roles in environmental discourse. It was also found that developed countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia are leading contributors. Emerging nations like India and Indonesia are also gaining ground. Analysis also revealed that influential journals like *Sustainability*, *Environmental Politics*, and the *Journal of International Women's Studies* have been central to disseminating this research.

The keyword analysis conducted helped in visualizing trend topic which revealed that, "Ecofeminism" is the most frequently cited term. This confirms its prominence as a foundational concept in this domain. Closely associated keywords such as "climate change," "environmental policy," "female," and "women" reflect the current thematic interests of researchers. This reinforced the interconnectedness of gender and environmental sustainability. The thematic analysis was also conducted in which "Feminism," "sustainable development," and "theoretical study" emerge as motor themes. Themes like "ecofeminism," "environmental policy," "women's status," and "developing world" are categorized as fundamental yet underdeveloped, signaling opportunities for deeper empirical investigation. Niche themes such as "women's organization," "environmental politics," and "India perception" suggest specific and mature areas of scholarship that are highly specialized.

The findings also highlight that women's unique connection with nature—stemming from both social and biological dimensions. This positions them as critical actors in environmental policymaking. The study also provides critical insights for policymakers and governance institutions by highlighting the necessity of integrating gender-sensitive approaches into environmental policy frameworks. The strong link between ecofeminism and sustainable governance indicates that including women in legislative and regulatory processes can lead to more inclusive, equitable, and effective environmental outcomes. Governments and environmental agencies can benefit from adopting ecofeminist principles to reshape outdated, anthropocentric policies into more holistic, nature-centered frameworks.

This research contributes significantly to the academic discourse by mapping the conceptual and intellectual structure of ecofeminist literature. By identifying core themes, motor topics, and emerging areas through bibliometric and thematic analyses, it helps scholars understand the evolution and current status of the field. The identification of underdeveloped but essential themes (like ecofeminism in the developing world and gender discrimination) offers a roadmap for future theoretical exploration. The findings solidify the argument that women are not just victims of environmental degradation but also agents of change. This provides a powerful narrative for advocacy groups and NGOs working on both gender and environmental

justice. The emphasis on women's lived experiences and their relational understanding of nature also supports grassroots mobilization and the creation of female-led environmental initiatives. As such development organizations involved in climate and gender policy can utilize the study's insights to strengthen their programmatic frameworks. The emphasis on women's roles and ecofeminist ideologies also offers a culturally sensitive and community-based approach to sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

The study also highlights the need to embed ecofeminism and gender-inclusive sustainability concepts in educational curricula, especially in social sciences, environmental studies, and policy programs. By making these frameworks part of academic training, institutions can prepare future leaders and professionals who are sensitive to the interconnections between gender, justice, and the environment. The themes identified in the research encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between environmental scientists, gender experts, policymakers, and community stakeholders. This integrated approach can foster innovative solutions that reflect both ecological needs and social realities, reinforcing the value of ecofeminism as a bridge between environmental and social governance. However, significant research gaps remain, particularly in integrating intersectionality, amplifying voices from the Global South, and translating ecofeminist theory into measurable policy outcomes.

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Concept of Gender Equality among Learners with Higher Education

Dr. Qaisur Rahman

ABSTRACT

Gender is considered to be state of a person with is based on his biological features and also how the society looks at them. On larger note it is culturally determined and is not only a biological determination of children. As per gender equality it is a fundamental right it is the sense of equity which considers both men and women are equal. It is equal in every aspect of life in developing their personal abilities and making choices. It is a state where access to resources and opportunities is regardless of gender. This equality also includes economic participation and decision making. In common conversations sex and gender are considered to be same but there is lot of difference between the concept of gender and sex. It is categorized as male and female it is connected which biological aspect of a person and is fixed at the time of birth it never changed across time and space whereas gender is categorized as masculine and feminine and is something which is determined through socialization. Thus it's very clear that sexually male and female are quite different but when it comes to gender they should be considered equal and this is what gender equity talks about with the sole aim of understanding the concept of gender equality keeping in

mind gender equity index which has basic three dimensional inequality indicators education participation and empowerment. The study includes of gender employment social conditions and education. Education is commonly recognized to advantage individuals and encourage national development. Educating females and males leads to similar increases in their subsequent earnings and develops future opportunities and selections for both boys and girls. However educating girls produces many additional socio-economic advances that benefit the entire communities. These benefits include increased economic productivity higher family incomes delayed marriages reduced fertility rates and improved health and survival rates for infants and children. The main purpose of this research paper is to understand gender equality in education. Over the years education has focused on access and equality while inadequate attention has been paid to retention and achievement and the quality or the relevance to education. The promotion of gender equality within the educational institutions leads to a higher enrolment and retention rate and it helps to ensure that males and females of all age groups are able to acquire benefits of education. Within the educational institutions it is necessary that gender concerns need to be identified and accordingly adequate procedures should be put into practice. When proper measures and policies will be put into operation then within the schools and higher educational institutions there will be prevalence of gender equality. To promote gender equality in education it is important to recognize and report on the indicators such as the net and gross enrolment of the girls and boys gender equality in enrolment equality in the educational outcomes and the completion rates of the girls and boys. These factors will assist the individuals in formulation of measures and procedures in an adequate manner that would be helpful in the promotion of gender equality.

Key Words: *Concept, Gender Equality, Higher Education.*

1.0 Introduction:

Gender is a social quality and a feature which is always the element playing a crucial role in developing personality of the person. In a country like India where a plural society exists there a lot of variety and differences in cultural language and dressing. But then beside all these there is a major bifurcation based on the gender of the person regardless of the community religion of caste to which the person belongs. This study is only an attempt to bring out the attitude and understanding of people towards the concept of gender equity. Gender is a social concept that has an influence upon the approaches parts accountabilities and behaviour patterns of boys and girls and men and women in all societies. Gender relations differ in societies. It is a women's

and people's issues formed by power relations in multicultural societies like India. It deals with human concerns incorporating diversities and variations. It has been the most prevalent form of discrimination operating across cultures in developed and developing societies. When one research upon the present frame work of gender discourses the prime concern is how gender functions as an element of making an improvement in knowledge. Education has the inherent potential of introducing social change in the frame work of gender relations. Therefore cognizant and varied interventions have been put forward by the government of India to address gender equality in education at the centre and state level. The development of the curriculum and the instructional materials takes place into consideration of gender issues. During the course of pursuance of the educational programs in various fields there are certain areas that are of concern to the males and there are some in concern for the females. Therefore it is important to integrate gender considerations into the activities that are required to develop the curriculum and the instructional materials in an appropriate manner. To lead to progress in all areas it is vital to identify the sources and the indicators that would lead to progress and development. In the case of gender equality it is essential to identify the areas where there is a need for gender equality. The decision making processes should require consultation with others and accordingly effective decisions should be made that may prove to be beneficial to all the individuals. When teachers get job within the educational institutions they are required to undergo a training program or they go through a training program prior to their recruitment. Within the training program the teachers are provided with all kinds of knowledge and information needed to perform their job functions in an effective manner. They are also provided information about gender equality and treat all the individuals equally. Integration of the gender awareness components into the pre-service and the in-service teacher training is important. A momentous initiative was undertaken in (1986) with the enactment of the National Policy on Education (NPE) and its revised POA (1992). This philosophy has also been reflected in the National Policy on Empowerment of Women (2001). Gender equality in education has been revealed within the curriculum frame works developed by the apex national organization like National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). In this regard curriculum frameworks of (1975; 1988; 2000; and 2005) have made precise efforts to put emphasis on gender disparities in education. The journey has been from the feelings of apprehension to considerable inclusion. While numerous efforts have been made on integrating gender concerns in education globalization liberalization and expansion in information technology have once again made it mandatory for reconsidering gender concerns in education in a proactive manner as a vital developmental program. Gender debates and discourses have been put into operation within the overarching concern for democratizing education.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study are to measure the attitude and understanding of people regarding the concept of the gender equality. The objectives are as follows:

1. To develop awareness towards gender equality amongst people.
2. To evaluate the difference in the concept of equality because of the sex.
3. To observe the effect of gender equality in health and education.

1.2 Methodology of the study:

Population of the study is B.Ed. colleges in Hazaribag Jharkhand. The sampling method includes the probability sampling method followed by stratified sampling method and strata based on different colleges. The sample was collected the sample size being 150. The sample constitutes of both teaching and non-teaching staff of the colleges. The tool used was a questionnaire which constituted of 17 questions which measured the attitude understanding education and perception of the people regarding the concept of gender equality. As the present work intended to measure the understanding level of gender equity amongst people descriptive survey approach was used

1.3 Concept of Gender equality in Education:

Gender equity in education in India aims to take into account of the educational concerns affecting both girls and boys within the country in the field of education and the types of initiatives that are needed to secure meaningful and a sustainable access to all. Both the data and the research literature that have been obtained are analysed to put emphasis upon the interconnecting nature of the educational areas. Viewing gendered access alongside concerns such as education of the children belonging to the scheduled caste scheduled tribes other backward classes and Muslims disability deprived marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society poverty and child labour. Other side concerns are also discussed in terms of the provision of education and gendered schooling practices. India accounts for (30%) of the world's total illiterate population and around (70%) of these illiterates are women. As per 2001 Census data women constitute (48%) of the total population within the country but around (46%) of women are still found to be illiterate. Problems of gender disparity and discrimination begin with access to education. The gender parity index (GPI) at the primary and upper primary levels was (0.9 and 0.8) in (2003) respectively. This remained more or less the same in (2005-06) for primary GPI was (0.92) and for upper primary (0.84) and once the girls are able to get enrolled in schools they are rather more expected than the boys to continue their education in an efficient way. Access and maintenance problems develop at the higher levels of education with the GPI at

lower secondary and upper secondary levels dropping to (0.73 and 0.67) respectively. Female education has long been recognized to create strong correlations with the other dimensions of human and social development. The low levels of education affect the health and nutritional status of women. For instance in India if the women will not possess education or enhance their literacy skills they will not be able to accomplish something in their lives. When there will be enhancement of education amongst the women then the cases of suffering from the diseases caused by malnutrition would decline progressively with the increased levels of education. Height and body mass index (BMI) differ with levels of education and illiterate women are reportedly at more risk of having lower height and BMI leading to higher deficiency of iron and other nutrients. Similarly while (56%) of the illiterate women suffer from anaemia the percentage declines to (40%) in the case of the women who have obtained at least high school education. There has been strong economic and social evidence of the high returns to the education of women. Most of the communities continue to under invest in the education of the women. In the pursuance of the primary education there has been narrowing in the gender gaps. On the other hand in the secondary and higher education discriminatory treatment against the women and children continue to exist. Economic and social privilege also affect the gendered patterns of access with girls in secondary and higher education that primarily came from higher income and social groups are offered higher social status. The women and girls who belong to marginalized communities and low socio-economic groups are considered disadvantaged and they are discriminated against every area. It is believed that females belonging to deprived and disadvantaged communities do not possess the abilities to understand they are slow learners and it is difficult to provide them any kind of training or instructions. The profoundly entrenched undervaluation of female labour recognized mainly with the reproductive or the household province motivates the confidence in many communities that educating women would bring low returns as abilities required in the reproductive sphere require domestic socialization and not many years of schooling. The gender division of labour continues to reward women less within the work place. This has resulted in moderately lower female education and work participation reproducing the ideological bias against considering women as the heads of the household and primary care taker. Low valuation of women as labourers in the market place and association of female labour with satisfying domestic responsibilities including child rearing has led to a deep rooted cultural association of women with the institutions of marriage and family.

1.3.1 Gender equality for learners

Gender equality is an often used but it is occasionally defined. Translating the

concept of gender equality in education into a concrete background will assist the education programmers to perform the functions of planning managing and evaluating the education projects. To this frame work it is clear that differences and establish interrelationships amongst the perceptions of gender parity gender equity and gender equality. In addition to drawing out the distinctions between equity and equality the frame work also supports other key issues in education such as access superiority continuousness and significance. Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to recognize their complete human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic social cultural and political development. Equality and justice are the building blocks of equivalence in education. There have been opening of new gender gaps in the field of education. Young men as compared to young women are enrolled in school to a lesser extent. They have poor academic skills and low educational achievements. The areas are gender equality in education attitude behaviour and confidence. In the field of education there is a difference between gender parity and gender equality. Parity is acquired when the same proportion of girls and boys are enrolled in schools and educational institutions with an aim of enhancing their educational qualifications skills and abilities and achieving educational goals. For the achievement of gender equality reaching parity within the system of education is necessary. Gender equality is referred to the process of providing equal and fair treatment to the girls and boys. To ensure fairness there must be formulation of measures to compensate the historical and the social advantages that prevent the girls and the boys from participating on the same area Education. Within the classroom setting the attitude of the teachers towards the students is primarily on the basis of their performance. The performance may be academic performance their way of interaction with the individuals their behaviour attitude and approaches attendance. The student who is good in all areas scores well and earns appreciation from his teachers. On the other hand students who are weak in certain areas achieve low grades. The differences in the scores of the students do not mean that the teachers are discriminating against them. Equity does not imply treating all the learners in a similar manner of the reason being there are many factors that would lead to the disadvantages of the students in having a chance to achieve equitable results. The classroom and the educational institution is to acquire appreciation from the students required to be effectively implemented the necessary areas in an operative manner. The individual's accomplishments are determined by his or her capabilities and efforts. In educational institutions support and assistance from the teachers is considered to be imperative to enhance one's performance. The teachers do make efforts and regard all the students equal. It is unlawful to discriminate against anybody. On the other hand it is up to the students to implement proper decorum within the classroom and in the educational

institution. Discipline is an imperative area and to maintain discipline students are required to give respect and communicate in an efficient manner with the other individuals. An efficient strategy for providing education to the girls also includes attention to parity and equality simultaneously. In addition involvements on behalf of the girls should be incorporated into a rational and a logical approach of the educational reform.

1.3.2 Dimensions of gender equality in education

There are four main dimensions of gender equality in education and they are as follows:

Equality of Access:

Equality of access means that girls and boys within the schools and other educational institutions should be made available equal opportunities to acquire admission in the formal informal non-formal and other alternative approaches to basic education. The attendance of the students is regarded to be the main area which identifies that whether access has been achieved. To obtain access it is vital that students should have an appropriate means of transportation available. If the schools are at a walking distance to the homes this gives them pleasure and satisfaction to a large extent. Awareness of the parents should be raised they should be made aware of the rights and responsibilities that they have towards the education of their children. In addition to basic numeracy and literacy skills and it is vital that students should have access to health and well-being democracy good governance conflict management and self-discovery. It is vital to make provision of scholarships for the students, especially belonging to disadvantaged communities. Training of the communities is to monitor access and quality through the parent teacher associations and the school management committees ensuring that women are part of the management. Improving the capability of the schools is to make provision of educational services through education finance mechanisms that increase expenditure on quality inputs such as text books and decrease parental payments that may impede student attendance.

Equality in the Learning Process:

Equality in the learning process means that girls and boys receive equitable treatment and attention and have equal opportunities to learn. This means that girls and boys are provided the same curriculum and teaching aids though the course work may be taught in a different manner to make available the various learning styles of girls and boys. It means that all students should be open to the teaching methods and materials that are free of stereotypes and gender bias. In addition it means that boys and girls should have the independence to learn discover and develop skills in the academic subjects and extra-curricular activities. The teachers should be trained in

various kinds of teaching practices and help the students to integrate who have been belonging to the marginalized communities such as poverty ethnicity language or gender discrimination. The students should be treated with kindness courtesy and respect by the teachers as well as the fellow students. Increase in the school safety and decrease in crime and violence should be through provision of the environmental conditions which may make the students feel comfortable within the school environment. The participation of the girls should be encouraged into the technical training.

Equality of Educational Outcomes:

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys are made available equal opportunities to accomplish and consequences are based on their individual aptitudes and determinations. To ensure rational opportunities for achievement the length of school professions academic qualifications and diplomas should not differ based on a person's gender. Devices for evaluating individual achievement should also be free of any gender bias. What tests examinations and assessments measure tells students what matters and to the extent that these mechanisms reflect a gender bias they convey messages to the students that can discourage their attention in school or in particular subjects. The results from the classroom tests examinations and internal assessments can have an influence on the confidence levels of the boys and girls and the opinions of their abilities and what is expected of them. They can also impact what is taught in the classroom and how content is distributed. Where tests or examinations are used to control promotion into future grades or other types of educational opportunities the extent to which there may be bias in these devices is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes.

Equality of Results:

Equality of results takes place when the status of men and women their access to products services and resources and their ability to contribute to participate in and benefit from economic social cultural and political activities are equal. This entails that career opportunities and the time needed to protected employment after leaving full-time education and the incomes of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal. The four dimensions of gender equality are related, but the relationship is multifaceted and not necessarily direct. Equivalence in enrolment and greater gender equality in schooling can often co-exist with variations outside of education. In fact several studies have established that educational achievement for girls does not mechanically transform into higher economic status or greater political participation as adults. At the same time cultivating opportunities for women in the labour market can give them the financial means to send their children to school. Attaining equality after learners to complete their trainings and entering into the labour market requires interventions that go beyond the education sector. Conducting of the

social mobilization campaigns aimed at having an increase in the status of women and girls and values within the society.

1.3.3 Tools for gender responsive educational environment

Attitudes of the teachers and school administrators as well as the prejudiced curriculum and teaching learning materials often prove to be problems within the course of equal learning made available to the girls and boys. Gender sensitive education on the other hand is one that treats women and men and girls and boys equally encourages them to realize their complete potential. Gender sensitive approaches and learning materials encourage non-stereotyped images of women and men which are crucial for generating a learning atmosphere that is reasonable and maintainable for all the individuals. Teachers and other facilitators must be aware of student's needs who are both men and women. There is a need to redress this inequality and eliminate the areas that may prove to be barriers within the course of gender equality. This gender lens is envisioned for all the individuals involved in the process of formulation of the curriculum and teaching and learning processes. It includes the areas that need to be reflected upon at every stage of the process of generating resources and the curriculum. This gender lens should provide assistance to all the individuals who are involved in school management. These include not only the project or programme people but also teachers and school heads to reflect in a better way on the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of the educational institutions. They can be more efficient way and make all the essential transformations so that gender equality prevails within the educational institutions. To promote gender equality the individuals are required to be determined within their mind-sets. The strong determination of the individuals would largely contribute in the promotion of gender equality.

Within schools, students come to learn and they attend classes of different subjects as well as get involved in extra-curricular activities. In classrooms teachers have a vital role to play. They are considered to be the individuals who play an important part in the shaping of the success and failure of the students. Their interpretation of the curriculum and the instructional methods communication with the students and way they allocate duties homework assignments and conduct class tests and exams are important factors in the attainment of education. The attitude and approaches of the teachers have to be framed in such a manner that students should feel that they are approachable amiable and considerate in their attitude. The teachers are the first and the foremost individuals that need to promote gender equality in education above the teachers who make provision of ideas and suggestions to them. The teachers are required to follow the guidelines and the instructions that they receive from their superiors. Teaching and learning materials are regularly gender biased.

In teaching and learning materials women and girls are stated on a less frequent basis as compared to men and boys. In fact whenever they are stated girls and women are being anticipated as inactive introverted and vulnerable while boys and men are considered as courageous bold spirited brave and shrewd. The potential on the part of the women for enhancing their performance in the non-traditional jobs may not be often mentioned. Women may be rarely referred to as manager's pilot's lawyer's scientist's doctors or heads of state. In the present times women are working for themselves to gain empowerment. They are assuming multiple roles in their lives. They are acquiring high education and becoming professionals. Therefore it has been understood that women are performing the same kinds of roles as men.

1.3.4 Teaching and learning process in education

Text and instructional materials at the secondary stage have sharper forms related to science social science languages and mathematics. It is important that at this stage children are able to acquire knowledge and information entrenched in different subjects apply the knowledge to understand their living realities and are capable experienced enough to interconnect convey and critically understand their surroundings from a gender perspective. While teaching the subjects at the secondary stage the pedagogical methods have to be well organized for making the classrooms in various settings genders sensitive. In schools as well as in higher educational institutions there is prevalence of co-education. In this type of education, men and women girls and boys are together part of the educational institutions. In co-education important areas that are required to be taken into consideration are males and females should be provided with equal opportunities and there should not be any discrimination between them. Evaluation should be on the basis of the performance of the students. Within the classrooms and educational institutions the students are required to interact amongst themselves. They not just come to schools to enhance their academic qualifications but also learn a number of other areas such as, communication manners and decorum for coping up with the difficulties and problems. Classroom interactions have an important influence upon the personalities of the children. The methodology that has been adopted in the impartment of the content related to many spheres of knowledge not only stimulates learning and understanding but also overall personality of the students. In the frame work of gender equality involvement of the children in negotiations dialogs group discussions problem solving diverse activities and articulation of their uncertainties and experiences are the ways of breaking gender barriers related to caste class region and location. In the teaching and learning of different subjects offered to the students at the secondary stage of education one may consider some suggested gender inclusive undertakings in the forms of education.

In the teaching and the learning processes the instructors are required to formulate the techniques and adopt the methods with regards to the gender differences. It is vital to explain the concepts with clarity and examples. In some of the areas girls and boys are provided with different examples and ideas. The use of the teaching aids should be used as readily as possible. Within the classroom setting where there are girls and boys then it is vital to make use of effective teaching aids that would facilitate their learning in an appropriate manner. It is vital to make the teaching and the learning processes more dialogical and encourage team work. It is to make use of techniques for enhanced participation and involvement. Students should be provided with the opportunities to give ideas and suggestions. Teachers should help the students in providing solutions to all their problems and concerns. In educational institutions inappropriate action may take place between students hence it is important that they should treat each other in an appropriate manner.

1.3.5 Challenges in gender equality in higher education

The area of education experiences a number of challenges with regards to gender equality. Girls and women are deprived in a number of ways although changes in the government policies and application of more holistic strategies are required. There are also minor procedures and actions that can be undertaken when added together and can contribute to changes in practice in the direction of larger gender equality in education. Nevertheless all the impediments for democratic conduct of girls and women in education there are many examples of successful projects and programmes. In some of the educational institutions there is discriminatory treatment against scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. Particularly the girls belonging to these communities are not provided with the similar kinds of opportunities as compared to students belonging to the other groups. At the higher level of education there is a wide gender gap. Girls dropping out of school and discontinuing their higher education and remaining behind the boys in class performances and in the retention rates were the issues of highest concern not only in India but in other countries as well. Access to secondary education was stated as one of the largest problems and one of the main reasons for the lower enrolment of girls in secondary education. Secondary schools are primarily located in the urban areas or in district centres which implies that students either have to walk a long distance to school or have to stay in dormitories for the entire months or semesters. The physical environmental conditions of the schools created obstacles within the course of the participation of the girls within the school's activities and functions. The women and the girls in most cases developed insecurity within their mind-sets that they feel vulnerable in interacting with the teacher's staff as well as the fellow students. The schools did not have proper infrastructural facilities.

Due to these problems, the girls were more affected as compared to the boys and this led to a decline in the enrolment of girls. The deprived conditions and the lack of facilities also led to the drop out of students from the schools. The drop out of girls was higher than the boys as it is obvious students need proper facilities within the schools to facilitate learning. The conditions of the schools were in a more deprived state in rural areas as compared to the urban. The teachers within the educational institutions should be properly trained regarding gender equality. In most cases teachers prove themselves to be treating all the students equally and not discriminating against anybody. Teachers do lack gender awareness and this is stated to be a concerning issue. Teachers are unaware of gender sensitive teaching methodologies and neither do teacher trainers know about it. The commonly deprived quality of teaching and teachers' low qualifications in a negative manner affect a gender sensitive pedagogy. There have been studies conducted on the attitude of the teachers regarding the gender roles and the relationship of the teachers with the boys and girls students.

1.4 Discussion:

Gender planning differentiates gender needs from women's needs and gender is further divided into strategic needs and practical gender needs. While the latter deal with more immediate issues perceived by women themselves and the former aim at the more fundamental issue of the emancipation of women. Such a frame work is useful in clarifying gender needs in education and developments for these two kinds of needs are essential for achieving gender equality in education. The contribution of gender to the field of education and development should not be ignored. First of all it is helpful in analyzing the nature of inequalities and secondly it has changed women's perceived role from that of recipients of welfare to active agents for transformation and finally it has clarified the issue of north-south relations in academic thinking. Studies in both gender and education should be academic as well as practical and therefore they should continue to be in touch with the gender reality and the educational reality in order to further productive research. The two fields are likely to enrich each other as long as forthright dialogue continues. School and education are considered to be positive and good and improvements are to be made within the existing system. Strategies include attempts to increase access such as promotion of good practice. In the equal opportunities commission and training to change attitudes of teachers and students Liberal feminism is based on the assumption that schooling is positive and improves women's welfare. Social evolution is assumed and the state is perceived as a benevolent actor which provides services and goods for the benefit of the people. Significant consideration has been paid to improving access and quality at the primary level however there is some indication that secondary level education may provide

higher returns especially for girls. The financial returns to schooling at the secondary and tertiary levels are steadily high and differentially high for young women. The opening between the returns to higher and lower levels of schooling is growing thus placing an increasing premium on secondary and tertiary schooling for later achievement in the labour market. Within the educational institutions the students belong to different castes class's religious groups and socio-economic backgrounds. In order to provide education in an appropriate manner it is vital to treat all the students equally and not discriminate between them. If primary school enrolment and completion rates are high but there is not any prevalence of gender equality then this may lead to detrimental consequences. Absence of gender equality will obstruct the learning and understanding of the students within the schools. It will also impede the promotion of job satisfaction amongst the teachers and the staff and lead to a decline in the enrolment rates. Access duration and quality are the crucial variables in realizing educational benefits. The promotion of gender equality will provide satisfaction to not only the students but also the teachers and the staff members. The students will take pleasure in getting enrolled in schools. They will feel pleasure in interacting with the students around and enhancing their skills and abilities in an effective manner. Therefore besides the performance of the work duties efforts should be made to promote gender equality in education. It has been observed that teachers pay more attention to the male students provide more feedback to them and communicate with them in an effective manner. The girls need to get more encouraged. They mainly feel more vulnerable within the educational institutions as compared to boys hence, teachers need to pay equal attention to them and make attempts to solve their problems. In rural areas the families encourage the education of the boys they possess this viewpoint that boys should be provided with good education and training so that they are able to obtain an appropriate employment opportunity. The boys are regarded to be the assets and should be encouraged to acquire education. In the present existence the rural masses have been communicated about this viewpoint that girls should be treated equal as compared to the boys. They should be provided with complete freedom to attend schools and enhance their educational qualifications. The girls in urban and rural areas get enrolled in school but besides education they also have to do the house hold works. The boys are given complete time to study whereas girls have lesser time to devote towards studies. There is a high rate of absenteeism amongst the girls as compared to the boys the girls have more responsibilities than the boys hence the implementation of other tasks and functions leads to an increase in the rate of absenteeism. To facilitate gender equality in education it is vital to bring about transformations within the attitude behaviour and mind-sets of the teachers. Within the rural communities as compared to the urban the teachers themselves possess this

viewpoint that girls and women are enhancing their literacy skills and acquiring education so that they are able to accomplish something for themselves. As in order to live a successful life education is regarded imperative. On the other hand they pay more attention towards learning and understanding of the boys. As they possessed this viewpoint that education of the boys is more important. It is vital to bring about a transformation in this thinking and approach the learning of the girls is equally important as the learning of the boys. In the present existence what boys can achieve and do to generate well-being and sustain the living conditions of themselves and their families the girls can do the same provided they are given the opportunities by their family members and them themselves to develop an interest and enthusiasm in learning.

1.5 Recommendations:

The recommendations to bring about gender equality in education have been stated as follows:

Identification of the numerous entry points for gender inequalities which include enrolment strategies guidelines and practices curriculum relevance position of the teachers learning environments security new technologies and resource allocation. These areas are imperative for leading to success of the educational institution. When attempts have been made to promote gender equality it is necessary to make sure that all the guidelines technologies resources and so forth should be allocated equally amongst the girls and the boys.

Ensure that gender concerns are recognized and addressed in the actions that are putting emphasis on the global issues and education in predicaments or post conflict situations. There are occurrence of problems and difficulties in the lives of the students due to the need assistance and suggestions from their teachers and the counsellors. They are required to treat all students equally and provide valuable and meaningful suggestions to them in accordance to their problems.

It is important to conduct an analysis of how precise educational programs and policies have an influence on the girls and boys in a different way. It is vital to take into account different roles responsibilities requirements and interests and report them during the process of project design. The attitude approaches mind-sets outlook learning abilities and perspectives are different amongst the girls and the boys. The identification of differences with respect to these areas is important for carrying out certain tasks and functions.

Within the educational institutions students are provided with the opportunities to assume leadership roles. The attainment of leadership roles would help in enabling them recognize their responsibilities work towards the attainment of the common

goals and objectives to become achievement oriented. Making interventions for the girls and women by integrating them into a comprehensible complete approach for the education reform is also an important area to promote gender equality.

Within the educational institutions besides the teachers and the principals there are other staff members as well as who should be made aware about gender equality. Development of practical devices for support programming of the staff in designing planning implementing reporting stating and evaluating programs that address reasonable and justifiable access and quality from a gender perspective. The students within the educational institutions learn what is taught to them. If they are made aware about gender equality then certainly students who are understandable will contribute in the promotion of gender equality.

1.6 Conclusion:

Thus the analysis clearly shows that there a difference in way of looking at gender because of sex of the person and education. Though the concept of gender equity is prevailing in our society yet there are some traditional gender norms in our society which are still followed and accepted. The result is prevailing gender inequality and secondary place of women in society. It is because of which according to a survey done by state the percentage of enrolment of girl child at primary stage is maximum i.e. (99%).which reduces stage wise at secondary stage it comes down to (76%) still lowers at senior secondary to (53%), at higher stage it comes down to barely (23%). This results in lowering of the literacy rate of women to (65%) as compared to male which is (82%). In India there are many other parameters which are the result of causes of gender inequality. In a society like India merely forming laws and regulations will not help the only way to bring out gender equity is through social reforms which will change the basic parameter of discrimination which is responsible for the differences in attitude towards female. The social reforms are supposed to change the attitude and understanding of women about themselves too by making the concept of gender equality clear so that they realise their role in the society and able to fight for there right in education.

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Sexual Harassment Against Women in India: A Literature Review

Nibedita Sarma

ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment against women in India is a pervasive issue impacting their personal safety, emotional well-being, and professional growth. Despite legal advancements such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013), Section 354A of the IPC, and the IT Act (Amendment 2008), the implementation of laws and redressal mechanisms remains inadequate. This literature review compiles key studies and reports to analyse the forms, prevalence, consequences, and legal frameworks concerning sexual harassment in workplaces, public spaces, and cyberspace. By exploring over 60 research findings and government reports, this review identifies critical gaps and offers policy recommendations for comprehensive societal change.

Keywords: *Sexual harassment, Gender violence, Workplace harassment, Public harassment, Cybercrime, Women's safety, India, Legal frameworks*

1.0 Introduction:

Sexual harassment against women remains one of the most pervasive and underreported forms of gender-based violence, especially in India, where deep-rooted patriarchy, institutional apathy, and social stigma intersect to create a hostile environment for victims. While gender equality is a constitutional guarantee under Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, women continue to face a multitude of challenges when asserting their right to safety, dignity, and autonomy in both private and public spheres. Among these challenges, sexual harassment—ranging from workplace misconduct to street-based catcalling and online abuse—represents a profound violation of a woman's personhood and basic human rights.

In recent decades, India has witnessed a surge in awareness and discourse around sexual harassment, largely triggered by high-profile cases such as the Nirbhaya gang rape case (2012) and the #MeToo movement in India (2018). These events brought public attention to the systemic failures in preventing, addressing, and penalizing harassment. Despite legal reforms such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), and strengthened penal provisions under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008, implementation remains fragmented. Societal attitudes continue to normalize or trivialize harassment, contributing to the underreporting of incidents and discouraging victims from seeking redress.

Sexual harassment in India manifests across three major domains; workplace, public spaces, and cyberspace, each shaped by distinct power dynamics and legal complexities. In professional environments, hierarchical structures and a lack of effective internal complaints committees often hinder justice. In public spaces, women are routinely subjected to verbal abuse, stalking, and physical advances, deterring their free mobility and participation in civic life. Meanwhile, cyber harassment, including threats, doxing, impersonation, and unsolicited sexual messages, has emerged as a particularly insidious form of abuse, especially in the digital age where internet usage is widespread among young women and professionals alike.

Furthermore, intersectional vulnerabilities, such as those faced by Dalit women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and informal workers, often compound the severity and invisibility of harassment. Many of these women operate outside formal institutional structures and are not protected under conventional legal frameworks like the POSH Act. Research by Daruwalla et al. (2020) and Sahoo & Pradhan (2020) shows that marginalized women face disproportionate levels of harassment with little to no access to legal or social remedies.

This issue is also closely tied to economic development and the need for inclusive growth. As more women enter the workforce and engage in digital platforms for

education and employment, the demand for secure environments becomes indispensable. Safety is not only a gender issue but a developmental one without addressing it, national progress remains inherently unequal and exclusionary. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018) underscores the impact of harassment on women's career advancement, mental health, job satisfaction, and overall participation in the economy.

Given this backdrop, a comprehensive understanding of sexual harassment—its causes, manifestations, and systemic responses—is crucial. This article aims to analyze the phenomenon in India across three dimensions: workplace harassment, public harassment, and cyber harassment, while also exploring the effectiveness of current legal frameworks, implementation challenges, and the way forward. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to both academic knowledge and policy discourse on gender justice in India.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the forms and prevalence of sexual harassment against women in India.
2. To explore harassment in different settings: workplaces, public spaces, and cyberspace.
3. To identify key research gaps and recommend policy interventions.

1.2 Methodology used in the study:

The study adopts a qualitative research design using secondary sources. Peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from NGOs, government publications (e.g., NCRB, MWCD), and legal documents were reviewed. Articles from 2007 to 2024 were prioritized to ensure both foundational and recent insights. A total of 60 references were included based on relevance, citation count, and empirical value.

1.3 Analysis of Data:

A comprehensive analysis has been prepared and given below;

1.3.1 Workplace Harassment:

Sexual harassment in the workplace remains one of the most underreported crimes. Cultural silence, power hierarchies, and fear of retaliation discourage victims from seeking justice. Some of the related literatures were found in this regard;

Banerjee (2013): 70% of women do not report workplace harassment due to professional repercussions. Rai & Dikshit (2011) high incidence in healthcare and hospitality due to vulnerable work conditions. Kumar & Kaur (2018) only 20% of companies have fully functional ICCs. Chaudhuri (2007) Dalit women experience

intersectional harassment. Chopra & Rao (2017) anti-harassment policies are often treated as formalities. Ghosh (2015). Informal sector women lack legal safeguards. Mulla & Krishnan (2006) harassment correlates with male-dominated workplaces. IT sector women report covert harassment, (Shukla & Sinha, 2014). government employees fear being labeled troublemakers (Patel (2017). Das & Sharma (2019) Only 13% of POSH complaints result in punitive action. Mukherjee (2020) HR departments lack clarity on harassment definitions.

Singh & Tripathi (2016): 41% experience harassment; 10% report. Roy & Bhaduri (2020) found junior staff fear hierarchical retaliation. Narain & Kapadia (2021): Training often superficial and ineffective. Dasgupta (2018) asserts that women are discouraged from speaking out. Sen & John (2019) LGBTQ+ harassment is largely invisible in policy. Bhattacharya (2017) startups lack formal redressal mechanisms. Bose & Mitra (2016) media houses suppress complaints. Prasad & Thomas (2022) gap between university policies and implementation. Gupta & Singh (2020): Victims suffer emotional trauma and career stagnation.

1.3.2 Public Harassment

Women frequently face harassment in public spaces, including streets, transport, and marketplaces. The following related literature was found in this regard:

ActionAid (2016): 79% of Indian women face street harassment. Oxfam India (2020) 53% of women feel unsafe in public spaces. Kumar & Das (2019) street harassment restricts mobility and autonomy. Similarly, Nayar (2021) normalisation of catcalling perpetuates fear. Verma & Soni (2018), harassment is highest in urban slums. Ghoshal (2022) school-going girls fear public harassment the most. Bhardwaj & Malik (2021) Police inaction discourages reporting. Tiwari & Mukherjee (2020) Transport workers are often perpetrators. Das & Mishra (2017) Women modify their routes to avoid harassment. Jain (2016) fear of assault limits women's access to education. Singh (2022) public harassment linked to mental health issues. Ray & Basu (2019) harassment increases during festivals and events. Sahni (2021) mobile phone videos often deter perpetrators. Sharma & Patel (2023) awareness campaigns have minimal long-term impact. Vohra (2020), perpetrators are often adolescents influenced by peer pressure. Agarwal (2017) harassment reduces female participation in outdoor sports. Mehrotra & Khan (2021) rural areas have fewer cases due to underreporting. Joshi & Lal (2023) safety apps provide temporary but insufficient solutions. Reddy (2019) women are often advised to adjust clothing, not perpetrators' behaviour. Sehgal (2019), Delhi ranked as one of the most unsafe cities for women.

1.3.3 Cyber Harassment

The digital space has become another unsafe arena for women. With rising internet usage, cyber harassment is increasingly common.

CyberPeace Foundation (2022) 70% of women aged 18–30 experienced cyber harassment. Chakraborty & Bose (2021) common forms include doxxing, morphing, and cyberstalking. Singh & Mehta (2022) women influencers are targeted disproportionately. Roy & Sinha (2018) many cases go unreported due to digital illiteracy. Jain (2020) cybercrime cells are under-resourced and lack gender sensitivity. Basu & Datta (2019) revenge porn rising; victims face societal blame. Banerjee (2021) women journalists face extreme trolling and threats. Pathak (2023) WhatsApp forwards contribute to harassment in closed groups. Hussain & Jha (2017): Educational campaigns reduce repeat offenses. Verma (2022) LGBTQ+ users at higher risk in online spaces. Pandey (2021) blackmail via hacked content common among teens. Goswami & Das (2020) AI tools can help track online abuse.

Kaur & Sharma (2023) digital abuse correlates with offline violence. Saxena & Menon (2019) few women are aware of IT Act protections. Mishra (2022) online platforms delay content takedown. Kapoor (2021) cyberbullying contributes to increased suicide ideation. Dutta & Sahu (2020) social media influencers are 4x more likely to be harassed. Khan (2018) women hesitate to share digital abuse due to victim-shaming. Naqvi & Fernandes (2022) rural women lack awareness of cyber laws. Tyagi (2023) VR and gaming spaces also show rising harassment.

Legal Frameworks

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

This Act was enacted following the Vishaka Guidelines (1997) to provide a safe work environment for women. It mandates:

- Formation of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) at all workplaces with 10+ employees.
- Time-bound complaint redressal procedures.
- Confidentiality of the victim's identity. However, studies (IBA, 2017; MWCD, 2020) show that implementation is poor. Only 36% of companies were fully compliant as of 2020.

Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

This section criminalizes physical contact, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography, and demanding sexual favours. It ensures:

- Imprisonment up to 3 years and/or fine for offenders. Yet, many cases are not

registered under this section due to police apathy and social pressures (Kumar & Choudhury, 2020).

Information Technology Act (Amendment 2008)

Key provisions include:

- Section 66E: Punishes violation of privacy through capturing images.
- Section 67: Penalizes publishing obscene content in electronic form.
- Section 67A: Addresses sexually explicit content. Despite its scope, enforcement remains weak due to technological lag in police forces and lack of coordination with platforms (Chakraborty & Bose, 2021).

1.4 Conclusion:

Sexual harassment against women, in all its forms, whether at the workplace, in public spaces, or through digital mediums, remains an urgent and multidimensional issue in India. Despite the existence of a robust legal framework and growing public awareness, the reality for many women is still characterized by silence, stigma, and systemic inaction. This paradox of legal progress coexisting with widespread impunity highlights the complexity of addressing gender-based violence in a society still deeply influenced by patriarchal values, social hierarchies, and cultural taboos surrounding female autonomy and sexuality.

The analysis of workplace harassment reveals a significant gap between law and practice. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 was a landmark step toward recognizing the dignity of working women. However, its inconsistent implementation, the lack of awareness among employees and employers, and the often-perfunctory functioning of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) dilute its effectiveness. Many women especially those employed in unorganized sectors such as domestic work, agriculture, and informal urban occupations, remain outside the protective ambit of this law. The fear of professional retaliation, reputational damage, and social judgment continues to deter victims from filing complaints, further perpetuating a cycle of silence and recurrence.

In public spaces, the threat of sexual harassment affects women's freedom of movement and right to participate fully in civic life. The normalization of behaviours such as eve-teasing, stalking, groping, and verbal abuse reflects a broader societal indifference and an ingrained culture of misogyny. Although laws such as Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code criminalize sexual harassment, underreporting remains a major barrier to enforcement. Moreover, police apathy, societal victim-blaming, and judicial delays erode faith in institutional justice mechanisms. Public transport, marketplaces, educational institutions, and even homes often fail to offer women a

sense of safety and respect, contributing to what feminist scholars describe as “everyday terrorism” against women (Phadke, 2011).

The emergence of cyberspace as a domain for communication, work, and expression has also introduced new forms of sexual harassment, often more anonymous, insidious, and persistent. Women are subjected to doxing, non-consensual circulation of intimate images, cyberstalking, and sexually explicit trolling. These offences are particularly harmful given their potential for viral spread and the long-term psychological impact on victims. The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 provides some recourse, but enforcement remains difficult due to technological challenges, jurisdictional issues, and inadequate cybercrime training for law enforcement personnel. The lack of clear redress mechanisms on major social media platforms further aggravates the situation.

What emerges from this study is a clear need for a multifaceted and intersectional response to the issue of sexual harassment. Legal reforms must be accompanied by strong institutional accountability, gender-sensitization training, and public education campaigns that challenge cultural norms supporting harassment. Civil society organizations, media, and educational institutions must play a more active role in promoting a culture of zero tolerance. Additionally, special attention must be paid to the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, including Dalit women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in informal employment, whose experiences often go unrecognized and unaddressed by mainstream legal discourse.

A victim-centric approach grounded in confidentiality, empathy, and non-retaliation is essential for creating safe environments for women. Strengthening grievance redressal mechanisms, ensuring timely legal action, and fostering community engagement are key strategies for bridging the implementation gap. The role of men as allies must also be emphasized, as sustainable cultural transformation requires collective accountability.

In conclusion, while India has made commendable steps in establishing measures against sexual harassment, the battle for safe and dignified spaces for women is far from over. It demands not only legal and institutional reforms but a fundamental reimagining of social attitudes toward gender, power, and equality. Only when women’s voices are heard without fear and their rights are respected without exception can India truly claim progress toward gender justice.

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Gender disparities among undergraduate students in relation to Locus of Control

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the Gender disparities among undergraduate students in relation to Locus of Control. The main objectives of the study were to study the significant difference in Internal Locus of Control and External Locus of control among undergraduate students based on gender. The research employed a descriptive design and used simple random sampling technique to select a sample of 60 undergraduate students. The tool used to collect data was Locus of Control Scale, developed by Samayalangki Nongtdu & Yodida Bhutia. Statistical methods including mean, standard deviation and t-test were utilized for analysis. The results revealed that no significant difference in internal locus of control based on gender, but a substantial difference in external locus of control based on gender.

Keyword: *Gender disparities, Undergraduate students, Locus of Control*

1.0 Introduction:

Human psychology is highly complex, with numerous interrelated components. Psychologists have long worked to create a universal theory that can explain behavior for everyone, but the factors that influence human conduct differ from person to person. The Locus of Control, first proposed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, is one well-known theory. This theory describes the degree to which people think they have control over the things that happen in their lives. It centers on an individual's understanding of the reasons underlying life events.

Rotter was influenced by the Social Learning Theory and held that there is a close relationship between cognitive and behavioral components. According to the social learning theory, rewards and punishments have an impact on human behavior, either reinforcing or diminishing certain behaviors. According to Rotter, these reinforcements rewards or penalties direct behaviour and shape people's understanding of the repercussions of their choices. Their attitudes and behaviors are then influenced by these beliefs, which Rotter referred to as the "Locus of Control of Reinforcement." The fundamental concept of the Locus of Control is explained by the theory's foundation in anticipation. Locus of Control is based on expectancy-value theory, which holds that behavior is influenced by the value placed on particular outcomes and the expected likelihood of those events based on particular behaviors (Majzub et al., 2009). To put it another way, people are more inclined to take a specific action if they value a certain outcome and think it will be achieved. Based on his earlier Social Learning Theory, Rotter and his colleagues developed the concept of internal versus external management of reinforcement in 1966. This idea suggests that a person's interactions with their surroundings, which they interpret and give meaning to, influence their personality. Rotter underlined that in order to comprehend behavior completely, one must take into account both the environment, which includes the stimuli that people respond to, and the individual, who is influenced by their education and prior experiences. The Locus of Control theory also examines why some people fail to consider reinforcement contingencies, emphasizing how their conduct is influenced by their ideas about what led to their experiences and what success or failure is attributed to.

The Locus of Control, as defined by Rotter (1966), is the extent to which people believe their behavior or innate characteristics have an impact on events. It can be either internal or external. Individuals who have an internal locus of control feel in control of their results and think that their abilities, choices, and efforts determine them. On the other hand, people who have an external locus of control think that outside factors like fate, luck, or influential people determine their results. Rotter discovered that individuals range from extremely internal to extremely exterior.

It is important to understand that Locus of Control relates to a general expectation in problem-solving, focusing on whether conduct is perceived as related to meeting demands regardless of reinforcement, and is not specific to any one reinforcement. Furthermore, depending on prior experiences where they learnt to control or not control reinforcements, people with an external orientation may act inwardly in specific circumstances and vice versa. Locus of Control can change in response to new experiences and changing expectations, even though it usually remains constant over time (Leftcourt, 1981).

1.1 Significance of the study:

According to recent psychological studies, there is a direct correlation between a person's beliefs and their conduct. At the same time, a multitude of factors shape both beliefs and behaviors. One common predictor of the belief-behavior relationship is gender differences. Gender role expectations vary by society, ethnicity, and culture; men are generally expected to be forceful and self-assured, while women are expected to be emotional and nurturing (Parenthood). Consequently, the locus of control may be impacted by these social standards.

Over time, numerous research has examined related or comparable subjects in various populations. However, because research has been done on a variety of groups that may differ in terms of ethnicity, culture, social and economic variables, and other characteristics, the results might not always line up. Furthermore, human evolution has been aided by scientific developments over time, which can result in changes in an individual's beliefs, thoughts, actions, and attitudes. Thus, the gender disparities in college students' locus of control are the main subject of this study.

1.2 Review of related literature:

Choudhury & Borooah (2017) investigated the connection between Guwahati City undergraduate students' locus of control and academic success. 240 male and female students from different degree colleges participated in their study. The findings showed no discernible beneficial relationship between pupils' academic success and external locus of control.

Jerome Flores et al. (2020) in their study "Locus of Control, Self-Control, and Gender as Predictors of Internalizing and Externalizing Problems in Children and Adolescents in Northern Chile" found that both self-control and locus of control were significant predictors of internalizing and externalizing problems in children and adolescents across all regression models. The findings support the prediction models suggested in the study, indicating that self-control, locus of control, and gender together act as predictors for internalizing and externalizing issues in school-aged children.

Ramya & Thulasidharan (2020) conducted a study on locus of control among undergraduate students. Researcher used convenience sampling to choose a sample of 120 college students from the Kottayam District in order to investigate. They analyzed the data using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Their results showed that male and female students, as well as undergraduate and graduate students, differed in the locus of control scale's "Powerful Others Control" dimension. The Internal Control and External Control dimensions did not, however, differ significantly between these groups.

Kaur & Singh (2021) investigated undergraduate students' internal locus of control in connection to their gender and academic stream. 216 undergraduate students from two Chandigarh institutions participated in their study. The findings indicated that while gender had no discernible effect on internal locus of control, academic stream had a substantial impact. Furthermore, there was no discernible relationship between gender and stream in terms of internal locus of control.

Yadav (2023) examined the connection between locus of control and academic performance in undergraduate students ages 18 to 21 at the university of Delhi in India. The study discovered no correlation between university humanities students' academic achievement and internal locus of control.

1.3 Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To study the significance difference in Internal Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.
2. To study the significance difference in External Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.

1.4 Hypotheses of the study:

1. There is no significant difference in Internal Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in External Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.

1.5 Methodology:

Based on the objectives, the researcher selects a descriptive study design and uses a simple random sampling method. The study focused on undergraduate students from the Lakhimpur district of Assam, including both male and female students from arts and science stream. The study included a sample of 60 undergraduate students.

1.5.1 Tools for data collection

In the present study, the tool used to collect data was Locus of Control Scale, developed by Samayalangi Nongtdu & Yodida Bhutia. The scale contains 40 items with a total 19 numbers of positive and 21 numbers of negative items.

1.5.2 Statistical Techniques used

In the present study, the data were descriptively analyzed using mean, median, and standard deviation. To find out the significant difference between two variables researcher has applied t- test.

1.6 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Hypothesis-1: There is no significant difference in Internal Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.

Table 1:
Internal Locus of Control among male and female undergraduate students

Variables	Sub group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value
Internal Locus of Control	Male	30	88.36	3.86	58	0.37
	Female	30	87.46	3.91		

Figure 1: Bar diagram showing the comparison Internal Locus of control based on gender

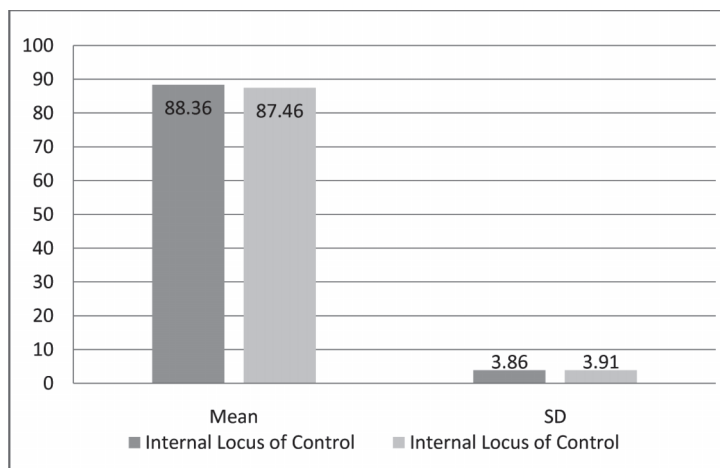


Table 1 shows that the mean and standard deviation of internal locus of control for male and female are as 88.36 and 3.86 and 87.46 and 3.91 respectively. The calculated t-value is 0.37 with 58 df, which is higher than the level of 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis-2: There is no significant difference in External Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.

Table 2:
External Locus of control among male and female undergraduate students

Variables	Sub group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value
External Locus of Control	Male	30	62.26	3.2	58	0.004
	Female	30	65	3.83		

Figure 2:
Bar diagram showing the comparison External Locus of control based on gender

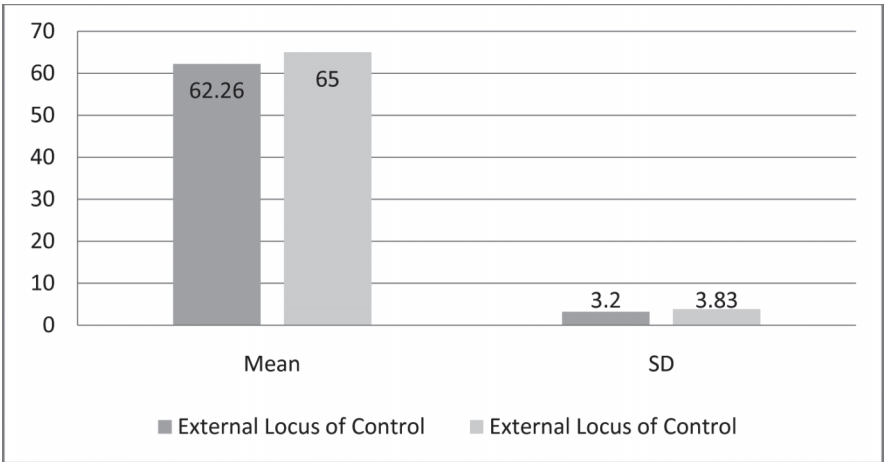


Table 2 shows that the mean and standard deviation of External locus of control for male and female are as 62.26 and 3.2 and 65 and 3.83 respectively. The calculated t-value is 0.004 with 58 df, which is less than the level of 0.05. So, the null hypothesis is rejected.

1.7 Findings of the study:

The major findings of the present study are as follows:

1. There exists no significant difference in Internal Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender.
2. There is a significant difference in External Locus of Control among undergraduate students based on gender. Female students have a higher external locus of control than male.

1.8 Conclusion & Suggestions:

A person's perception of the fundamental causes of the occurrences in their life is known as their locus of control. Previously, locus of control was described as a personality trait that relates to an individual's consistent beliefs about their own efficacy. The current study, which examined undergraduate students based on their gender, discovered a significant difference in external locus of control based on gender but no significant difference in internal locus of control.

Following suggestions should be made for the further research of locus of control

1. A larger sample can be used in a comparable study.
2. Students from both high and poor socioeconomic backgrounds can participate in the study.
3. A study can be conducted by considering the impact of elements like social media and technology improvements.

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Problems of Graduate Female Students in STEM : A Study in the Colleges of Dhemaji District, Assam

Rajashree Dutta

ABSTRACT

The participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields remains a critical concern in India, particularly in rural and underdeveloped regions. This study explores the problems faced by graduate female students pursuing STEM education in the colleges of Dhemaji district, Assam. Using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, the research identifies key challenges including gender bias, lack of institutional support, inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and societal expectations. The study also examines the different barriers that discourage sustained engagement in STEM disciplines. Findings reveal that despite interest and potential, many female students encounter systemic and cultural obstacles that hinder their academic progress and career aspirations. The research highlights the urgent need for policy interventions,

mentorship programs, and gender-sensitive educational reforms to create an inclusive and empowering environment for women in STEM. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on gender equity in education by shedding light on localized issues affecting female STEM students in a remote district of Northeast India.

Keywords: *Problems, Graduate Female Students, STEM*

1.0 Introduction:

STEM education refers to four key fields: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. This educational framework emphasized the connection between these subjects, aiming to foster critical thinking, creativity, innovation and problem solving skills. However, female participation in these fields remains disproportionately low in many parts of the world, including India. The Dhemaji District of Assam presents a unique socio-economic and cultural context that influences female students' engagement in STEM disciplines. This study seeks to understand the extent of female participation in STEM at the graduate level and the problems they encounter.

Gender disparity remains a major challenge in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Various research shows that women are underrepresented in STEM careers and are less likely to pursue STEM degrees compared to men. This gap limits creativity and diversity in STEM, as fewer perspectives and ideas are included in problem-solving. A more diverse STEM community can lead to new ideas and faster advancements in science and technology. (India STEM foundation)

Women in STEM : There has been a lot of discussion in recent years about increasing the number of female workers in STEM disciplines. (Ong et al. 2011). What are the reasons for this demand for more women in STEM fields, and why is it crucial to have more females in these fields? The cases aren't difficult to figure out. A larger talent pool is needed to improve the productivity of the STEM workforce (Hira, 2010). The global economy is becoming more competitive, and countries must innovate and produce new product to stay ahead of competition. Women account for nearly half of the world population and all countries want to make the most of their wealth. As more women join the race for jobs in the STEM fields, the countries would have a greater pool of talent to choose from when it comes to STEM opportunities (Davis-Lowe, 2006). A larger set would seem to be preferable because it enhances the probability of finding the right talent and makes the crème de la crème available to work for the organization. Getting women on board in the STEM fields is expected by

have similar impact. Organizations should hope to improve the quality of their STEM workers by bringing in a diverse community of people such as women, minorities, etc (Davis-Lowe, 2006).

According to a Ministry of Science and Technology report, women continue to outweigh men in India when it comes to the number of people with degrees in science and engineering, with over 30% of female students choosing to study in STEM fields. Still, there remains a gender gap in the field; throughout the nation, women make up just 14% of STEM professionals. These findings highlight the glaring underrepresentation of women in STEM areas in India and highlight the need for concerted initiatives to increase diversity and gender equality in these sectors, with a focus on Girls in STEM and STEM Education for Girls.

1.1 Significance of the study:

The study of women's participation and the challenges faced by graduate female students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) is crucial for several reasons. It sheds light on gender disparities in education, identifies barriers to women's inclusion, and provides insights for creating equitable opportunities in STEM fields.

1. Understanding Gender Disparities in STEM

Women have historically been underrepresented in STEM disciplines due to cultural, societal, and institutional factors. By studying their participation at the graduate level, we can analyze whether gender gaps persist despite increased efforts for inclusion and identify key factors affecting women's enrollment and retention.

2. Identifying Barriers to STEM Education

From the study different Graduate female students in STEM often face multiple challenges. Understanding these barriers helps in formulating policies and strategies to support women's participation in STEM.

3. Promoting Diversity and Innovation

Diversity in STEM enhances creativity and innovation. Women bring unique perspectives to problem-solving and research. Encouraging gender diversity leads to more inclusive technological advancements and scientific breakthroughs.

1.2 Review of related literature:

Lahkar (1976) conducted a study on "the history and development of Women's education in Assam for the period from 1874-1970". The characteristics of the study were the coming of the British and Missionaries helped in setting up separate schools for girls. Zenana classes were started in Sylhet to provide facilities for girls. The gradual increase in the rate of enrolment of girls in colleges led to the opening of high schools and colleges for them. After 1882, a separate curriculum and a separate examination

for girls were introduced. For supervision, the post of Deputy Director of Public Induction was created.

Fennema (1981) conducted a research on Increasing women's participation in Mathematics: An intervention study. This study reports the evaluation of an educational intervention (Multiplying Options and Subtracting Bias) designed to increase the election of mathematics courses by high school females. A pretest/posttest control group design was used. Females in the experimental group, significantly more than females in the control group, increased their knowledge about sex-related differences in mathematics, indicated that they were going to study more mathematics both during and after high school, and actually enrolled in more mathematics courses. Change in the perception of the usefulness of mathematics for their future lives was significantly related to change in plans for the study of mathematics. The effect of the intervention on male peers, mathematics teachers, and counselors is also reported.

Acker & Oatley (1993) wrote an article on "Gender Issues in Education for Science and Technology: Current situation and prospects for change. The author evaluates the most common theories, which often focus on either potential gender differences in traits like self-confidence or on institutional policies that encourage boys to dominate classroom engagement. They also point out negative aspects of both higher education and the profession. At the conclusion, they presented unanswered queries and problems about gender equality initiatives in science and technology education and offered potential study areas.

Ahmad & Yusuf (2013) had analyzed the Influences of socio-economic and Educational backgrounds of parents on their Children's Education in Nigeria. He revealed that parents' values, socioeconomic status and beliefs impact on students' academic achievement.

Catterall (2013) explored the meaning and importance of the E appearing in both STEM and STEAM and found some reasons for inclusion of Art.

Mandina et al. (2013) studied about the increasing female participation in advanced level mathematics. They had analyzed the study from the perspective from students and teachers in Zambabwe. The study recommended that gender and cultural biases attached to mathematics should be de-emphasized at home and school and that mathematics teachers should adopt some of the more recent reform-based instructional strategies that actively engage students while the Government should give incentives to girls who study mathematics at higher levels in order to encourage young females to pursue mathematical careers.

Dasgupta (2014) conducted a research on Girls and women in Science, technology, engineering and mathematics: STEMing the Tide and Broadening participation in STEM Careers. This article describes how specific learning

environments, peer relations, and family characteristics become obstacles to STEM interest, achievement, and persistence in each period. Evidence-based policies and programs promise to eliminate these obstacles, increasing girls and women's participation in STEM.

Konwar (2015) studied about the historical perspective of women education of Assam and also studied about the female literacy trends and enrolment of Assam. The researcher also studied different governmental initiatives for development of women education in the state of Assam.

Bailey & Graves (2016) wrote a article on "Gender and Education". They made an effort to give a general review of the state's gender and educational scholarship. They take into account broad tensions and shifts, developing pathways in inquiry, and historical trends shaping research patterns.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the enrolment trends of female students in STEM courses in Dhemaji District.
2. To identify the socio-cultural and economic barriers affecting female students in STEM.
3. To analyse institutional challenges faced by female students in STEM education.

1.4 Methodology:

This study employs descriptive method approach and qualitative data collection techniques. Surveys and structured interviews were conducted with graduate female students enrolled in STEM courses across select colleges in Dhemaji District. Secondary data from academic reports, government statistics, and institutional records were also analyzed. The sample included students from diverse backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issues.

1.4.1 Population and sample of the study:

The population of the study was included all science and technical higher educational institutions and colleges of Dhemaji district, Assam. The study was included all female students enrolled in the 2023-2024 academic year. The study sample included 40 number of female student from the colleges of Dhemaji.

1.4.2 Ethical Consideration:

Confidentiality of the identity and information of the respondents will be maintained .No question will be asked without permission.

1.5 Analysis and Interpretation:

Trends in Enrollment

- In many colleges of Dhemaji District, STEM courses such as Physics, Mathematics, and Engineering witness lower female enrollment compared to Arts and Humanities.
- Subjects like Biology and Chemistry tend to have relatively higher female participation, possibly due to their perceived alignment with medical and teaching professions.

Factors Influencing Participation

1. **Parental and Societal Expectations:** Many families in the district encourage traditional career paths for women, discouraging them from pursuing STEM fields perceived as male-dominated.
2. **Lack of Female Role Models:** The absence of women in leadership positions in STEM discourages young female students from entering these disciplines.
3. **Limited Awareness and Guidance:** Many students lack proper career guidance, leading to misconceptions about STEM opportunities.
4. **Economic Constraints:** Higher education in STEM is often costlier due to laboratory fees and technical resources, which may deter female students from lower-income families.

Problems Faced by Female Students in STEM:

Despite increasing awareness of gender inclusion, female students in STEM continue to face multiple challenges, categorized into social, institutional, and personal barriers.

Social Barriers

1. **Gender Stereotypes:** Prevailing gender biases create a perception that STEM fields are more suited for men, discouraging women from pursuing them.
2. **Family Restrictions:** Many families in rural areas prefer to educate male children in professional fields while encouraging females toward more “conventional” careers. Parents may discourage daughters from studying STEM, believing these careers are too demanding or unsuitable for women.

Institutional Challenges

1. **Lack of Female Mentors and Faculty:** The scarcity of female faculty members in STEM subjects leads to fewer mentorship opportunities for female students. Some of the institution has only one female teachers in every department.
2. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many colleges lack gender-friendly infrastructure,

such as separate laboratories for female students.

3. Limited Research and Internship Opportunities: Female students often struggle to find internships and research projects due to safety concerns and biased selection criteria.

Personal Challenges

1. Self-Doubt and Confidence Issues: Many female students feel discouraged due to the male-dominated nature of STEM fields.

2. Balancing Academic and Domestic Responsibilities: Women often bear household responsibilities along with their studies, impacting their academic performance.

3. Lack of Motivation and Peer Support: A hostile classroom environment with gender bias affects confidence levels among female students.

1.6 Discussion:

The study highlights that while there has been progress in female enrollment in STEM, several barriers continue to hinder their full participation. Societal norms and economic constraints remain the primary obstacles, alongside institutional inadequacies. Colleges with proactive gender-inclusive policies report higher female retention in STEM disciplines.

1.7 Conclusion:

The participation of female students in STEM in Dhemaji District remains lower than desired due to social, institutional, and personal barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach involving educational institutions, families, and policymakers. With appropriate interventions, the gender gap in STEM can be narrowed, enabling greater female representation and contribution to scientific and technological advancements.

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Gender Inequality in Work Place

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ABSTRACT

Gender inequality in the workplace remains a pervasive issue, manifesting in disparities such as unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. This research paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of gender discrimination within professional settings, emphasizing its impact on women's career trajectories and organizational productivity. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study examines the underlying socio-cultural norms, organizational practices, and policy frameworks that perpetuate gender disparities. By employing a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data with qualitative insights, the research aims to uncover the root causes of workplace gender inequality and propose actionable strategies for fostering an inclusive and equitable work environment. The findings underscore the necessity for systemic change, highlighting the role of organizational leadership, policy interventions, and societal shifts in challenging entrenched biases and promoting gender parity in the workplace.

Keywords: *Gender inequality, workplace discrimination, women's career advancement, organizational productivity, socio-cultural norms, policy interventions, gender parity.*

1.0 Introduction:

Gender inequality in the workplace remains a persistent global challenge, characterized by disparities in pay, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and limited career advancement opportunities for women. Despite legislative measures and organizational initiatives aimed at promoting equality, progress has been sluggish, and in some cases, regressive. For instance, in the United States, the gender wage gap widened for the first time in two decades in 2023, with women earning 83 cents for every dollar earned by men. This enduring inequity not only hampers individual career growth but also stifles organizational innovation and economic development. Addressing these disparities necessitates a comprehensive understanding of their long-term implications and the implementation of effective strategies to foster an inclusive and equitable work environment.

1.1 Objectives:

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze the impact of gender discrimination on women's career development and organizational performance.
2. To examine the socio-cultural and organizational factors contributing to gender inequality in professional settings.
3. To assess the effectiveness of existing policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in the workplace.
4. To propose strategies for creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

1.2 Methodology:

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through surveys distributed to a diverse sample of professionals across various industries, aiming to measure perceptions and experiences related to gender inequality. Qualitative insights were gathered via in-depth interviews with female employees, focusing on personal experiences of discrimination and barriers to advancement. Additionally, a comprehensive review of existing literature and policy documents was conducted to contextualize findings within broader societal and organizational frameworks.

1.3 Discussion of the Study:

Gender inequality in the workplace refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. This inequality often manifests in various forms, including pay gaps, lack of opportunities for advancement, underrepresentation in

leadership roles, discrimination, and bias in hiring, promotion, and performance evaluations.

Here are some common examples of gender inequality in the workplace:

1. Pay Gap: On average, women tend to earn less than men for the same work. This issue is often exacerbated for women of color, leading to an even wider wage disparity.

2. Leadership and Decision-Making Roles: Women are underrepresented in high-level leadership positions, such as CEOs, executives, or board members, despite making up a significant portion of the workforce.

3. Sexual Harassment: Women, and sometimes men, are more likely to experience sexual harassment at work, leading to an uncomfortable and unsafe work environment.

4. Stereotypes and Bias: Gender stereotypes (e.g., women being seen as less competent in technical roles) often shape hiring decisions, promotions, and everyday interactions, affecting the professional growth of women.

The long-term effects of gender inequality in the workplace are multifaceted, impacting economic growth, organizational effectiveness, and individual well-being.

Economic Implications

Persistent gender disparities hinder economic growth by limiting women's full participation in the labor market. The underutilization of women's skills and talents results in a significant loss of potential productivity and innovation. Addressing these inequalities could substantially boost the economy by unlocking the full potential of the workforce.

Organizational Consequences

Organizations that fail to address gender inequality risk reduced productivity and innovation. Exclusion of diverse perspectives, particularly those of women, can lead to homogeneous decision-making processes that overlook varied consumer needs and emerging market trends. Moreover, a lack of diversity in leadership positions can perpetuate a cycle of inequality, as evidenced by the "glass escalator" phenomenon, where men in female-dominated professions ascend to higher positions more rapidly than their female counterparts.

Individual and Societal Impact

On an individual level, gender inequality adversely affects women's mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and depression. Systemic discrimination and limited career opportunities contribute to low self-esteem and diminished job satisfaction.

Societally, these individual challenges aggregate, resulting in higher turnover rates and a depletion of experienced talent within organizations.

Strategies for Mitigation

Addressing the long-term effects of gender inequality requires a multifaceted approach:

1. Policy Implementation: Enforce equitable pay structures and transparent promotion processes to ensure fairness and opportunity for all employees.

2. Flexible Work Arrangements: Adopt flexible work policies, including remote work options and flexible hours, to support work-life balance, particularly for women managing familial responsibilities.

3. Leadership Development: Invest in mentorship and leadership programs tailored for women to cultivate a pipeline of qualified female leaders.

4. Bias Training: Implement comprehensive training programs to identify and mitigate unconscious biases within the workplace.

5. Supportive Policies: Provide adequate parental leave and childcare support to alleviate the burden on working parents and promote gender equality.

1.4 Conclusion:

Addressing gender inequality in the workplace necessitates a multifaceted approach that combines policy reform, organizational change, and societal transformation. Organizations must actively dismantle discriminatory practices, foster inclusive cultures, and ensure equitable opportunities for all employees. Policymakers should strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to protect against gender-based discrimination. Ultimately, achieving gender parity requires a collective effort to challenge and change the deep-seated norms and biases that perpetuate inequality.

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Occupational Stress of Female College Teachers in Relation to their Academic Involvement of Sonitpur District, Assam

Bhaswatee Boruah
Surajita Bora

ABSTRACT

This study specifically aims to investigate the degree of and the relationship between Occupational Stress and Academic Involvement of female teachers in different provincialized degree colleges of Sonitpur district of Assam. The study is based on primary data collected from 40 female teachers of different provincialized degree colleges of Sonitpur district. Descriptive survey method is used in this study. To measure the occupational stress of the female college teachers the “Teachers Stress Scale-MK” created by Mishra KS (2005) was used and the “Academic Involvement Scale” (AIS), created by D souza Flosy (2017) was used for measuring academic involvement of the female college teachers. The data are analyzed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Correlation statistics. The results of the study reveal that there exists a moderate-level of occupational stress and moderate-level of academic involvement among the female college teachers. The results of the study further reveal that there is a negative correlation between occupational stress and academic involvement of the female college teachers of Sonitpur district.

Keywords: *Occupational Stress, Academic Involvement, Female College Teachers.*

1.0 Introduction:

Stress is characterized a state of physical or emotional discomfort and a feeling of unable to cope with anxiety and discomfort, particularly in response to change (Vijayashree and Mund, 2011). Occupational stress is a term commonly used in the professional business industry. Occupational stress refers to ongoing or progressive stress experienced by employees due to workplace responsibilities, circumstances, environment or other stressors. Researchers suggest that with the rapid growth and development of technology and changing society, there is hardly any occupation left, the members of which do not suffer from effects of stress. There are several types of occupational stress based on individual employees, their job roles, company culture and different aspects. People challenge their abilities to cope when faced with work demands and stressors that do not match their knowledge and abilities which respond is called work-related stress (WHO). Looking at the wide range of work situations, it is understood that people suffer from stress due to reasons such as not getting the desired support from their supervisors and co-workers, as well as having little control over the work process and so on.

Previously, the teaching profession was traditionally regarded as a less stressful occupation, but during the last two decades, teaching has become a more challenging profession worldwide (Olivier et al., 2003). Borg (1990) reported that up to one third of teachers perceive their occupation as highly stressful. Having to adapt to the demands of a constantly evolving and changing society has created high levels of job stress for teachers. Teachers are constantly having to up-skill and reinvent themselves to excel in their chosen profession and adapt to a changing society. This constant quest for excellence, along with daily work responsibilities and personal obligations, can result in high levels of burn out. Stress impact negatively on teacher's physical, mental, emotional, social and behavioural wellbeing (Sutton, 1984). Occupational stress among teachers lead to alienation, apathy and absenteeism and eventually interfere with student achievement (Guglielmi and Tatrow, 1998). Also leads to undesirable work practices such as errors during working hours, absenteeism and workplace violence (Gitonga et al., 2016). Apart from teaching, teachers often have to carry out several other responsibilities such as conducting internal examinations, evaluating answer sheets, boarding new students, writing teaching notes and reports, maintaining discipline among students, organizing extracurricular activities, etc. They have to deal with time pressure and heavy workload. Lack of proper teaching resources, poor relationships with management and colleagues, and deteriorating school buildings also add to their suffering.

A good teacher should be involved in all educational activities so that he can be an inspiration to the children towards learning. He should have an interpersonal

relationship with his students. Only then can he conduct a great task like teaching with an open mind and enthusiasm and enlighten his personality among the students. If his interpersonal relationships and his work are closely related, he is able to function effectively. Teacher's academic involvement refers to the individual's involvement or participation in academic work. A teacher shows genuine respect for the teaching profession only if he thinks of his academic work as a central part of his life. Academic involvement of teachers is a very important factor for the effectiveness of the classroom and also for the improvement of the school. Various studies have demonstrated that, teachers with high levels of academic involvement tend to be satisfied with their job life and are highly committed to their organization. The actual success of a teacher in the educational process depends on the academic involvement of the teachers. The academic involvement of teachers is associated with a variety of fields including psychology, management, education and sociology.

Nowadays, times have changed. Instead of being the sole bread earner of men as in the past, both men and women now share the entire responsibility of family life and society equally. Women have made their presence felt in every thought of contemporary society. While doing all the household chores, women have contributed significantly in almost every field from action to aviation science, politics, engineering, medical profession to educators. Women working in higher education, particularly at the college level; the sole and main subject of this study. On the one hand, just as women have improved their socio-economic lives by working as college professors, the overwork, treatment of colleagues, unexpected tensions of the work environment, etc. put psychological pressure on them. There have been many changes in working life over the past few decades resulting in increased occupational pressures and work-life imbalance for female faculties in colleges. Therefore, the work-life balance of female employees has become an important area of discussion for researchers over the past few decades.

Whatever the reason, occupational stress has a negative impact on the overall lives of female employees. It harms work efficiency and productivity. Occupational stress not only causes physical illness, aging and other personal problems of employees, but also greatly hinders the motivation and dedication of an employee to work. Since occupational stress is having a negative impact on our work culture, there is a need for further studies on this subject area. So that we can elevate our work culture to a higher level by finding an appropriate solution to this problem.

1.1 Statement of the Present Study:

“Occupational Stress of Female College Teachers in relation to their Academic Involvement of Sonitpur District, Assam.”

1.2 Need and Significance of the Study:

Occupational stress has been linked to a number of factors, including a person's efficacy, productivity, personal health, and level of job quality. According to research, teacher occupational stress negatively affects students' academic performance (Kurian et al., 2020; Koech Jewen David, 2014), health (Nagra, 2013), and dedication to their careers (McCarthy et al., 2010), among other things. Teachers face numerous obstacles in the twenty-first century. Multiple tasks are expected of them. Research has shown that teachers are under stress due to situations like lesson planning, managing classroom behaviour (Chaplain, 2008; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007), organising and supervising extracurricular activities (Brown, 2005), dealing with challenging students, and parental pressure (Geving, 2007).

NAAC, whose main aim is to improve quality of higher education, encourages teachers to engage in research activities. This has added to teacher's existing high levels of stress, as they are required to complete teaching, evaluation and other administrative duties, leaving them with less time for research. So, this variable should be studied rigorously.

Review of related literature revealed that studies were undertaken on Occupational Stress of teachers but very few studies have been conducted for the college level teachers, especially for female college teachers. On the other hand, studies have reported that female teacher experience higher occupational stress than the male teachers.

Review of related literature regarding academic involvement revealed that that there were research studies pertaining to school teachers' academic involvement but less on college teachers. Academic involvement is one of the major requirements of a teacher. It is the extent to which the teacher views his/her academic work as a central part of his/her life. The academic involvement of a teacher is crucial to the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution. The relationship between academic commitment and occupational stress among female college professors has not received much research, particularly in the context of Assam. So, the researchers got interested to explore if there exists any relation between occupational stress and academic involvement of the female college teachers.

In addition, this study will be useful for examining the factors that contribute to teachers' occupational stress and for developing initiatives and programmes designed to lessen occupational stress.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the present study are:

i) To investigate the level of Occupational Stress among female college teachers of Sonitpur District, Assam.

ii) To investigate the level of academic involvement among female college teachers of Sonitpur District, Assam.

iii) To study the relationship between Academic involvement and Occupational Stress among female college teachers of Sonitpur District, Assam.

1.4 Operational Definitions of the Key Terms:

1.4.1 Occupational Stress: Occupational Stress can occur when there is a mismatch between the demands of workplace and an individual's ability to complete and carry out these demands. In the present study, Occupational Stress refers to the score obtained by a female college teacher in Teacher Stress Scale of Misra, K.S. (2005).

1.4.2 Academic Involvement: In the study academic involvement is the score obtained by the female college teachers in the standardized scale developed by D souza Flosy (2017).

1.4.3 College Teachers: Here, the term college teacher refers to all the female college teachers teaching in the provincialized degree colleges of Sonitpur district, Assam.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study:

- i) The population included only the female college teachers of Sonitpur District.
- ii) The study is correlational in nature.
- ii) The study was delimited to one independent variable namely, Academic
- iv) Involvement with respect to dependent variable viz., Occupational Stress of female college teachers.

1.6 Review of Related Literature:

According to **Hagen R** (2002), "Universities are the largest 'knowledge-based' institution in the region; hence they are urged by the industry and policy makers to transform their traditional roles of teaching and research by adding an additional pivotal role in economic regional Development". However, extra demands on female academic employees could contribute to their occupational stress and work-life imbalance. This can ultimately give rise to negative consequences for achieving the organizational goals and meeting the needs of the employees working with them. Today the cry of occupational stress is heard from all the nooks and corners of the world and occupational stress and work-life balance have become major concerns for working women as well as the organizations. Thus, an understanding of occupational stress and work life balance of females in the higher education sector is of great importance for educational set-ups as well as the nation at large so that female faculties

are encouraged to provide their efforts to build a civilized nation. Work-life balance and job stress go parallel to each other. What seems to be important in this connection is the importance employees give on balancing their lives and the effectiveness of workplace practices and policies in supporting them to achieve such a goal (Ross & Vasantha, 2014).

Reddy and Poornima (2012) showed strong support for the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between the occupational stress and professional burnout of university teachers. Jeyaraj (2013) found that teachers who reported greater stress were less satisfied with Teaching. It also reported that greater frequency of absences and a greater number of total days absent, were more likely to leave teaching (career intention), and less likely to take up a teaching career again (career commitment). Norban et. al. (2016) states that more stressful jobs will have more negative results that lead to leaving work and reducing the efficiency and business products. Ganapa and Sreedevi (2015) showed private teachers show more symptoms of stress. Sadeghi et al. (2016) showed that there was a reversed relationship between personality types and the degree of stress and there was just a significant relationship between gender, personality type and the degree of stress.

Saravanan, K and Lakshmi, KM (2017) conducted a study among the teachers of higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu and found that occupational stress of private school teachers is less compared to government school teachers. However, a study conducted by Dr. Hasan, (2014) in the Tehsil Laksar, Haridwar District reveals that private primary school teachers are more stressed than their counterparts in Government Primary School Teachers. He opines that the reasons for higher levels of stress among the private school teachers may be low salary and higher burden of work in private schools.

Dr. Jeyaraj, (2013) conducted a study on the occupational stress among the higher secondary teachers in Madurai District in Tamil Nadu and revealed that teachers who experience higher levels of stress are less satisfied with the profession and they are more inclined to leave the teaching profession and may never take up teaching as a career again. Kyriacou and Chien (2004), conducted a study on the causes of occupational stress and found that changing educational policies of the government are one of the main sources of occupational stress among primary school teachers.

Kabito and Wami (2020) reported that work-related stress among teachers is associated with Teaching experience, educational level, high job demand and poor relationships. In order to reduce stress levels among teachers, they recommend that action needs to be taken to balance work demand and experience. Further, teachers should be given opportunities to enhance their skills by upgrading their educational qualifications. Good relationships among teachers also help them reduce the stress

related to work. Deepa Sikand Kaut. S (2008) revealed that the daily interaction with pupils, co-workers and the incessant and fragmented demands of the teaching in general often lead to overwhelming pursuits and challenges which further leads to stress and strain. Sing and Katoch (2017) reported that school authorities should ensure a supportive and collaborative culture, provide stress and time management training and also leisure facilities to the faculties to prevent occupational stress. They also opine that teachers' involvement in decision making should be encouraged. Schools should also provide a pleasant working environment, job security, less work load, training to manage the behaviors of disruptive people, maximum facilities etc, to the teachers.

Kaur and **Kumar** (2019) state that both men and women in the teaching profession have the same amount of occupational stress. Antoniou et. al. (2013) in their article state that primary school teachers are more stressed compared to secondary school teachers and female teachers have higher stress and lower personal accomplishment compared to male teachers. They also mention that coping strategies help teachers overcome job stress and burn out and achieve positive outcomes with students.

It is observed that most of the studies found that females were more occupationally stressed as compared to males. A few studies revealed that the male employees were found to be highly stressed compared to their female counterparts and a few studies also revealed that gender differences have no effect on occupational stress. Whatever the study, it is clear that occupational stress can cause serious damage to teachers and the teaching learning environment. Regardless of the level of education, teachers occupy a prominent place from pre-primary to higher education and the responsibility for the effectiveness and success of education lies with the teacher. Therefore, the occupational stress of teachers is a curse for the education. It is very important to remove this pressure from the life of the teacher. This requires proper study. Many researchers have studied and shown that there are various related aspects which are associated with occupational stress of the teachers. All these aspects have a positive or negative impact on the field of education. In the above-mentioned studies, no specific studies have been conducted on the relationship of female teachers' academic involvement with occupational stress. Therefore, the present study seeks to study whether academic involvement has any relationship with female teachers' occupational stress.

1.7 Methodology:

The following methodology has been followed are as follows:

1.7.1 Method used : For the present study, the descriptive survey method was employed.

1.7.2 Population and sample of the Study: The population of the study consisted of all the female college teachers Sonitpur district Assam. All the female teachers teaching in the provincialized degree colleges constituted the population of the present study.

The sample of the present study consisted of 40 female college teachers teaching in the provincialized colleges of Sonitpur district. The sample was drawn randomly using simple random sampling technique.

1.7.3 Tools of the study: The investigators sought instruments to assess occupational stress and academic involvement among college teachers in the Sonitpur district in order to meet the needs of the current investigation. The Teachers Stress Scale-MK created by Mishra KS was used to measure the occupational stress of the female college teachers in the Sonitpur region. The Academic Involvement Scale (AIS), created by D souza Flosy (2017) was used for measuring academic involvement. The next section includes a description of the tools.

(i) Teachers Stress Scale-MK: In the present study, the level of occupational stress was measured using Teachers Stress Scale of Misra (2005) consisted of 50 items/statements. The scale evaluated ten aspects of work-related stress. These include (a) admission, (b) testing, (c) student quality, (d) research, (e) academic support, (f) interpersonal relationships, (g) ethics, (h) family attitudes, and (j) economic. It was a five-point rating system with the options “Never,” “Seldom,” “Some Times,” and “Always.” After giving the scale to a sample of 150 university and college professors, its reliability was judged to be.94.

(ii) Academic Involvement Scale: The Academic Involvement scale considered three components of academic involvement: (1) Teaching, Learning and Evaluation (2) Research (3) Student Support.

1.7.4 Statistical Technique Used: For the analysis of collected data mean, standard deviation was calculated. To fulfill the 3rd objective of the study Pearson Correlation was found out.

1.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation:

1.8.1 Academic Involvement: The mean value of the academic involvement of the female college teachers of Sonitpur district can range from 40 to 160. Low score signifies low level of academic involvement and vice versa.

1.8.2 Occupational Stress: The mean value of the scores obtained from individual cases can range from 50-250. Here, low score signifies low level of occupational stress among the female college teachers and vice versa.

Table 1.
Mean, Standard Deviation of Academic Involvement and Occupational Stress

Items	Academic Involvement	Occupational Stress
Mean	101.21	90.61
Standard Deviation	18.27	20
Count	40	40

From the above table, it is evident that mean value of academic involvement is 101.21 and the mean score of occupational stress is found to be 90.6. Hence, there exists a moderate level of academic involvement and occupational stress among the female college teachers of Sonitpur district.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of Academic Involvement and its components among Female college Teachers of Sonitpur district. (n=40)

Statistics	AI - 1	AI - 2	AI - 3	AI - Total
Mean	45.21	25	31	101.21

Table -2 shows the mean scores of the three components, AI – 1 refers teaching, learning and evaluation, AI – 2 refers research and AI – 3 refers student support of Academic involvement.

Table-3
Correlation analysis between Academic Involvement and Occupational Stress of female college teachers of Sonitpur district

Variables	Coefficient of Correlation
Occupational Stress	-.51
Academic Involvement	

Correlation analysis was done to understand the relationship between Academic Involvement and Occupational Stress of female college teachers of Sonitpur district. From table-3, it is seen that there exists a negative correlation i.e., -0.51 between the academic involvement and occupational stress of the female college teachers of

Sonitpur district, Assam. As academic involvement increases, occupational stress decreases.

1.9 Conclusion:

The aim of the study was to investigate the existing level of academic involvement and occupational stress of the female college teachers of Sonitpur district, Assam. The study was also conducted to determine the relationship between academic involvement and occupational stress of the female college teachers of Sonitpur, Assam.

According to the study's findings, there is a significant inverse association between female college teachers' academic involvement and occupational stress. Due consideration should be made to managing occupational stress in a learning environment. The significance of this study is noteworthy because there is little existing research on the academic involvement and occupational stress of college teachers, particularly in the context of Assam. This information will help in formulating suitable policies and practices.

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Government Schemes and Budgetary allocations for Women's upliftment: A Gender-Based review of the Union Budget 2025-26

Namrata Borah
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ABSTRACT

Women's development is a crucial aspect of national progress, requiring targeted policies and financial commitments. Government schemes and budgetary allocations play a pivotal role in addressing gender disparities and promoting women's socio-economic empowerment. This paper critically examines the role of government schemes and budgetary provisions in fostering women's development, with a special focus on the Union Budget 2025-26. It analyzes key allocations in sectors such as education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and social security, assessing their potential impact on gender equity.

Keywords : *Gender Budgeting, Women's Empowerment, Union Budget 2025-26, Government Schemes*

1.0 Introduction:

Gender budgeting plays a critical role in ensuring that economic policies and resource allocations actively contribute to gender equality. It is a fiscal strategy that assesses the impact of government spending on different genders, ensuring that women and marginalized groups receive equitable benefits. Over the years, gender budgeting has been widely recognized as an effective tool for bridging socio-economic disparities. More than 85 countries, including India, have integrated gender-responsive budgeting into their financial frameworks to promote women's empowerment and inclusive growth.

In India, gender budgeting was first introduced in the Union Budget 2005-06 as a structured approach to assess and allocate financial resources for women-centric programs. Since then, successive budgets have included specific provisions aimed at enhancing women's welfare through targeted policies and schemes. The Union Budget 2025-26 continues this trend, emphasizing financial inclusion, employment generation, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities for women. The government has introduced various policy measures to enhance women's participation in the economy, including increased allocations for existing schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and working women's hostels. Additionally, new initiatives have been introduced to promote digital literacy and financial independence among women, recognizing their role as key drivers of economic growth.

Despite constitutional provisions guaranteeing gender equality, structural barriers continue to limit women's access to education, healthcare, employment, and decision-making opportunities. Gender budgeting seeks to address these gaps by ensuring that government expenditures are aligned with the goal of women's empowerment. However, the effectiveness of such initiatives depends not only on financial allocations but also on implementation efficiency and policy execution at the grassroots level.

1.1 Objectives:

This study aims

1. to analyze the gender-responsive allocations in the Union Budget 2025-26, evaluating their impact on women's empowerment and socio-economic inclusion.
2. By examining government schemes through a gender lens, it assesses how funds are allocated for education, healthcare, employment, and financial independence.
3. To identifies gaps in policy implementation and challenges in fund utilization.

1.2 Methodology-

This study adopts a qualitative approach to assess the gender-responsive budgetary allocations in the Union Budget 2025-26. It relies on secondary data sources including

review of government documents, policy reports, budget statements, and relevant literature to evaluate the effectiveness of schemes aimed at women's empowerment. The analysis is conducted through a gender lens.

1.3 Analysis of the Study:

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR WOMEN'S UPLIFTMENT- The government has introduced various schemes to empower women across key sectors such as education, health, employment, and entrepreneurship. Education enhances women's knowledge, critical thinking, and leadership abilities, enabling them to challenge gender discrimination and assert their rights. There are some recent launched government schemes for women's upliftment-

1.3.1 Education sector

a) Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme (MMNMS): The Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme has launched on February 2024 by the government of India. It aims to prevent child marriage and promote higher education among 10 lakh girls in Assam by providing financial support. Unmarried girls in government institutions receive ¹ 10,000 for Class 11, ¹ 12,500 in the first year of graduation, and ¹ 15,000 in the final year of post-graduation, encouraging them to pursue education and build better career prospects.

b) AICTE Scholarship Scheme for BBA, BCA, and BMS Students (March 8, 2024): This scheme provides ¹ 25,000 annually to 3,000 female students from economically weaker backgrounds pursuing BBA, BCA, and BMS, with a yearly allocation of ¹ 7.5 corer. It promotes gender equality in management education.

c) Education Loan Scheme with E-Vouchers (July 23, 2024): This scheme offers e-vouchers to one lakh students annually, enabling loans up to ¹ 10 lakh for higher education in India with a 3% interest subvention. It reduces financial barriers, empowering more women to pursue higher education and achieve economic independence.

d) Namo Lakshmi Yojana (March 2024): It aimed at girls from families earning below ¹ 6 lakh annually in Gujarat, the scheme provides monthly assistance from Classes 9 to 12 and bonuses after board exams encouraging school completion and promoting higher education and job readiness.

e) Namo Saraswati Vigyan Sadhana Yojana (March 2024): It is designed to promote science education among girls in Gujarat, it provides ¹ 1,000/month for 10 months in Classes 11 and 12, plus ¹ 5,000 after passing Class 12. It encourages female participation in STEM and reduces gender gaps in science fields.

1.3.2 Health sector

a) Cervical Cancer Vaccination Initiative (February 1, 2024): The Government of India has introduced a nationwide initiative to promote the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination among girls aged 9 to 14 years, with the primary objective of preventing cervical cancer- a major public health concern in the country.

b) Ayushman Bharat Coverage for ASHA and Anganwadi Workers (February 1, 2024): To strengthen healthcare support for grassroots-level health personnel, the government has extended health insurance coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme to all Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi workers, including helpers. This policy covers over 11 lakh ASHA workers and 14 lakh Anganwadi functionaries.

c) Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (February 1, 2024): This initiative scheme has launched by the government of India is help to improve child development and maternal health. This scheme aims to upgrade Anganwadi centers to enhance the delivery of nutritional support and early childhood care and education. By focusing on infrastructure development and service quality improvement, the initiative seeks to improve nutritional outcomes, strengthen maternal and child health, and provide a solid foundation for children's early learning and growth.

d) U-WIN Platform and Mission Indradhanush (February 1, 2024): The U-WIN platform, coupled with the intensified Mission Indradhanush campaign, has launched to enhance the management and coverage of immunization services across India. The U-WIN digital system enables streamlined tracking and recording of immunization data, while Mission Indradhanush focuses on increasing vaccination coverage against preventable diseases and protecting women and children.

1.3.3 Employment sector

a) Namo Drone Didi Scheme(November 2023): The Namo Drone Didi Scheme aims to train women from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in operating drones for agricultural purposes, thereby creating new employment opportunities. Under this scheme, the government provides drones to 15,000 women's SHGs.

b) Mukhyamantri majhi ladki bahin yojana(July 2024): This scheme promotes economic independence by providing direct financial assistance. Eligible women aged 21 to 65 receive a monthly benefit of ¹ 1,500. The scheme targets married, widowed, divorced, abandoned, and destitute women, as well as unmarried women in families with an annual income not exceeding ¹ 2.5 lakh.

c) Subhadra yojana(September 17, 2024): The Subhadra Yojana provides direct financial assistance to women from economically weaker sections in Odisha, promoting their economic empowerment. This financial aid enables women to invest

in education, skill development, or entrepreneurial ventures, thereby enhancing their employability and fostering economic self-reliance.

d) Skill Upgradation and Mahila Coir Yojana: Led by the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises under the Coir Board Department, this scheme offers exclusive training programs to enhance women's skills in coir processing and production. It aims to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship among women artisans in the coir industry.

e) Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - This program enhances women's employability and entrepreneurial skills, encouraging their active participation in the workforce. It also addresses gender inequality as a key aspect of social and economic empowerment, providing various interventions aimed at building inclusive and sustainable livelihoods.

1.3.4 Entrepreneurship sector

a) Yashasvini Initiative: Launched on June 27, 2024, by the Government of India, the Yashasvini Initiative aims to campaign for women entrepreneurs and empower them by building their capacity, with a special focus on Tier-II and Tier-III towns. The initiative supports women by providing training, resources, and mentorship, particularly targeting those in smaller towns and cities. Its goal is to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and business acumen.

b) Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS): The Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups has launched in April 2023 by the Government of India to provide credit guarantees for loans to startups, including those led by women, thereby facilitating easier access to financial assistance.

c) Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) offers a unified access portal that connects women entrepreneurs with relevant stakeholders. It provides essential information, services, and support through a single platform. WEP fosters an ecosystem where women can pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale innovative initiatives, and develop sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses. These efforts reflect the government's strong commitment to creating an environment in which women entrepreneurs can thrive, thereby contributing significantly to economic development and societal progress.

1.4. Budgetary Allocations And Gender Responsive Budgeting:

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a crucial mechanism for ensuring that fiscal policies and public expenditures contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. It involves analyzing budget allocations and expenditures to assess their impact on different genders, particularly in addressing existing disparities. In

India, GRB has been institutionalized since the Union Budget 2005-06, with a dedicated Gender Budget Statement (GBS) that highlights allocations for women-centric schemes. The Union Budget 2025-26 continues this practice, aiming to strengthen economic opportunities for women, enhance social welfare programs, and promote gender equality through targeted spending.

Trends in Budgetary Allocations for Women's Welfare

The Union Budget 2025-26 maintains a strong focus on gender budgeting, with substantial financial commitments towards women's welfare across multiple sectors. Recent trends indicate an increase in the share of gender-responsive allocations, reflecting the government's commitment to closing gender gaps in education, healthcare, employment, and entrepreneurship. A key highlight of the 2025-26 budget is the rise in direct and indirect allocations for women's welfare under both Part A (schemes with 100% allocation for women) and Part B (schemes where at least 30% of funds benefit women).

One of the major areas of investment is financial inclusion and entrepreneurship, with increased funding for the **PM Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** and Stand-Up India Scheme, enabling more women entrepreneurs to access credit. Similarly, the **PM SVANidhi** scheme has seen higher allocations to support women street vendors, fostering self-reliance and economic participation. The budget also continues to emphasize digital financial literacy, ensuring that women, especially in rural areas, can leverage digital banking and fintech services for their economic growth.

In education and skill development, the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** scheme has received a revised financial structure to improve its outreach and efficiency. The expansion of scholarships, vocational training, and STEM education programs for girls aligns with the long-term vision of increasing female participation in high-growth sectors. Additionally, initiatives such as Skill India Mission and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) have been strengthened to provide industry-relevant skills to young women, enhancing their employability.

1.5 Impact of Public Spending on Gender Equality and Economic Participation:

Government spending on gender-responsive initiatives has a direct impact on women's economic participation, financial independence, and overall well-being. Studies indicate that investments in women's education and skill development significantly enhance workforce participation rates. The **Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)** program, which focuses on community-level empowerment, has been expanded with additional funding to provide rural women with access to legal aid, financial literacy, and vocational training.

Another crucial area of public spending is healthcare and social security. **The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** continues to receive dedicated funding to support maternal and child health, ensuring financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women. Similarly, increased allocations under **Ayushman Bharat** are targeted at improving healthcare access for women, particularly in underserved rural and semi-urban areas. The One Stop Centre Scheme, which provides support to women facing violence, has also received enhanced funding, reflecting the government's commitment to addressing gender-based violence.

Infrastructure development is another area where gender-responsive budgeting has played a transformative role. Increased investment in sanitation, housing, and transportation has a direct impact on women's mobility, safety, and overall quality of life. **The PM Awas Yojana (PMAY)** has seen a rise in women beneficiaries, with property titles increasingly being registered in their names, ensuring financial security. Similarly, urban and rural transport schemes have been tailored to include safety measures for women commuters, enhancing their access to workplaces and educational institutions.

Several case studies highlight the success of gender-responsive budgeting in India. States such as Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra have pioneered gender-sensitive financial planning, leading to improved social and economic indicators for women. Kerala's **Kudumbashree (meaning: prosperity of Family)** program, a globally recognized model, has successfully integrated microfinance, skill development, and social security measures to uplift women economically. Another example is Rajasthan's gender budgeting initiatives, where the state government has integrated gender audits into departmental spending. This has led to increased accountability and more effective use of resources in programs designed for women. Additionally, Maharashtra's gender budgeting in urban planning has resulted in safer public spaces and improved infrastructure for women commuters.

Analysis of GBS 2025-26:

The Union Budget 2025-26 continues to prioritize gender-responsive budgeting as a critical tool for advancing women's economic and social rights. The trends in budgetary allocations indicate a progressive shift towards greater financial inclusion, enhanced social security, and improved opportunities for women across sectors. However, while increased funding is a positive step, the success of these initiatives will depend on efficient implementation, monitoring, and grassroots-level execution. Gender budgeting, when effectively executed, has the potential to transform the economic landscape for women, ensuring a more equitable and inclusive society.

The 2025–26 GBS shows positive steps but includes some inconsistencies. **The Pradhan Mantri Cha-Shramik Protsahan Yojana**, which benefits tea garden workers in Assam and West Bengal, is listed under Part A, even though it doesn't specifically target women. Meanwhile, **the Mission Saksham Anganwadi** and **POSHAN 2.0** covers over 10 crore women and children, regardless of gender. Yet, it appears under both Part A and Part B, which lacks clear justification. Interestingly, its allocation increased by ¹ 1,300 crores from last year.

The **MGNREGA** Scheme has a GBS allocation of ¹ 40,000 crores, but its overall budget remains ¹ 86,000 crores—unchanged from last year. With 13.49 crore active workers, the estimated cost to cover wages is around ¹ 4 lakh crores, making the current allocation inadequate. Although wage costs are centrally funded and material costs shared 75:25 between Centre and states, about 11.98 crore workers without assigned jobs are eligible for unemployment benefits—something the budget fails to consider.

Having clear goals in the budget helps use funds better and find areas that need improvement. Without national data, local surveys can collect gender-based information to check if the budget is reaching the right people.

Kerala includes transgender funding in its gender budget, but many others don't. Even though trans people are legally recognized, they're often left out. Including them is important for true gender inclusion and support.

1.6 Conclusion:

Gender budgeting should be grounded in clear objectives and supported by reliable, disaggregated data to ensure accountability. All genders, including transgender individuals, must be meaningfully included across all states. The Gender Budget Statement should maintain consistent, transparent classifications. The MGNREGA allocations must reflect real wage needs and support unemployed workers.

In the recent Union Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized the role of women in India's development, marking them as one of the four key groups in the nation's progress strategy. The Gender Budget Statement (GBS) for 2025–26 outlines targeted allocations to support women across various ministries. Additionally, the focus on women's empowerment is highlighted as a core pillar of the "Viksit Bharat 2047" vision, reinforcing the government's ongoing commitment at both Union and State levels. So we may conclude that the government's schemes and budgetary allocations for women's upliftment reflect a strong commitment to gender equality and inclusive growth.

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Exploring the role of Technology in supporting Women's Economic Empowerment in Lakhimpur district: A Descriptive Study

Malaya Phukan

ABSTRACT

In today's digital age, technology plays a pivotal role in transforming economic landscape and expanding opportunities for marginalized groups. It serves as a powerful enabler of participation in the global economy. This study explores the role of technology in advancing women's economic empowerment with a focus on rural areas of Lakhimpur district, Assam. With a sample size of 150 women aged 18-40 years from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, the research using mixed method approach combining structured questionnaire and semi structured interviews to gather data. The findings reveals that many women are leveraging smartphones, social media platforms and digital financial tools to expand their business, reach new customers and manage transactions more efficiently. These have contributed to autonomy and income generated opportunities. Also addressing several barriers including limited digital literacy, social and cultural restrictions, risk of privacy and security. The study's findings have implications for policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders

working to women's economic empowerment which will contribute for achieving inclusive digital empowerment and advancing gender equality in the digital age.

Keywords: *Women's economic empowerment, Technology integration, Digital literacy, Inclusion, socio-economic development, digital economy.*

1.0 Introduction:

The fast growth of technology in the 21st century has significantly reshaped economics societies and individual livelihoods. The introduction of new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, block chain, cloud computing, mobile technologies are driving innovation, communication and economic growth. These emerging technologies are not only transforming industries but also revolutionizing the way we live and live.

As emerging technologies continue to evolve, they offer great potential to support gender equality and inclusive development. We know that empowerment is a powerful tool for creating positive change and improving one's life, situation or community. Empowering women is a necessary foundation for a equitable and prosperous society. There are various governmental schemes in India like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra , Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana etc. aimed at empowering women across various sectors.

Historically, women across cultures and societies have faced systematic discrimination and marginalisation which have hindered their full economic participation. However in recent years, technology act as a powerful tool in bridging these gaps by providing women with new opportunities for financial inclusion, skill development and entrepreneurship. Though the digital revolution has allowed women to overcome the traditional barriers still there are various challenges such as digital divide, societal norms, cyber security that hinder women's participation in the digital economy. Therefore it is very essential to explore the role of technology in advancing women's economic empowerment.

1.1 Review of related literature:

The researcher tried to study articles, journal and research paper related to the role of technology in supporting women's economic empowerment in Lakhimpur district, Assam but not found much work on it. Although some of the related literatures are presented here-

Pavithra G. And T D Thimmaiah(2023), "The economic empowerment of women through digital technology: A empirical analysis", the study findings shows that digital technology has a significant impact on women's economic empowerment also addressing challenges that need to be considered.

Srishti Aryan(2024), “Impact of digital technologies on women’s economic empowerment: Insights from SHGs in Bihar”, the findings reveals that digital technologies have made financial transactions easier, improve market connections and gives women more space for advocacy and networking. But challenges like low digital skills, poor infrastructure and social barriers still limit their use.

Wolayat Tabasum Niroo and Helen Crompton (2022), “Women’s empowerment through learning using technology”, the study finds three key areas of impact: health, entrepreneurship and communication also reveals areas in need of future research.

Joypal Hembram (2024), “Technological innovations and women’s economic empowerment: opportunities and challenges”, the study examines how community support, private efforts and government policies affect women’s economic empowerment through technology. It aims to guide stakeholders on using technology to promote inclusion, growth and gender equality in the digital age.

To sum up from the analysis of previous research works presented above, it can be interpreted that although numerous studies have been conducted on the role technology on women’s economic empowerment, limited research exists that specifically examines this relationship within the context of the researcher’s chosen geographical area. Hence the present study is an attempt to bridge these gap in literature.

1.2 Significance of the study:

The study is highly relevant as it explores the vital role of technology in promoting economic empowerment among women. Technology act as a transformative tool , has its potential to develop a inclusive environment by empowering women. Here are the some reasons that highlights it’s significant-

i) Access to information : Technology has it’s potential to provides women with vital access to market information, job opportunities, training programs , helping them to make informed economic decision.

ii) Digital inclusion: Technology helps women to take part in the growing digital economy.

iii) Promote entrepreneurship: Various digital tools like e-commerce platforms, online market places, mobile banking enable women to start and grow business from home.

iv) Skill development: Various online courses and training programs help women in enhancing their skills.

Thus the study will offer a valuable insights for policymakers, educators, NGOs to design more inclusive and targeted intervention that leverage technology as a catalyst for empowering women.

1.3 Objectives of the study:

- 1. To assess the level of access to digital technology among women.
- 2. To assess the impact of digital tools in facilitating entrepreneurship among women.
- 3. To identify challenges faced by women in accessing and utilising technology for women’s economic empowerment.

1.4 Methodology:

Research design: Descriptive method was used by the researcher to achieve the objectives of this study.

Population and Sample size: 150 women aged 18-40 years from rural areas of Lakhimpur district, Assam.

Sampling technique: Purposive sampling was used for sample selection.

Tools and technique: Data were collected using a combination of structured questionnaire and semi structured interview schedule.

1.5 Data analysis:

- Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics.
- Qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights

1.6 Findings and Discussions:

Table 1: Level of access to digital technology among women

Response category	Number of respondents (N=150)	Percentage
Regular access to smartphone with internet	120	80%
Occasional access to digital devices via family/friend	60	40%
Uses digital devices only at workplace	30	20%
No access to digital technology at all	10	6.67%

Table 2: Impact of digital tools in facilitating entrepreneurship among women

Response category	Number of respondents (N=150)	Percentage
Digital tools significantly improve business outreach and visibility	130	86.67%
Enable easier access to customers and suppliers	70	46.67%
Help in marketing and sales through social media platforms	110	73.34%
Provide access to financial tools and digital payment	65	43.34%

Table 3: Challenges faced by women in accessing technology

Response category	Number of respondents (N=150)	Percentage
Lack of digital literacy and technical skills	115	76.67%
Social and cultural restrictions	90	60%
Safety and privacy concerns	100	66.67%
Poor internet connectivity	75	50%

The findings of the study reveals a positive trend in women's access to and use of digital technology for economic empowerment. From the table1, A significant majority of women(80%) have regular access to smartphones with internet connectivity that indicates a growing digital readiness among women. 40% women rely on others for access to digital devices that highlights a partial dependence that may limit consistent engagement with digital tools. 20% women use digital devices exclusively at their place of employment or educational institution and a minimal portion of the sample i.e 6.67% remains completely excluded from the digital space. This may be due to poverty, limited awareness, or socio-cultural barriers.

From the table 2, in terms of impact of digital tools indicates that digital tools have had a substantial impact on various aspects of women's entrepreneurial activities. 86.67% respondents reported that digital tools greatly enhanced the visibility of their businesses. 73.34% of women found social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram useful for promoting their products and services. A significant number (46.67%) of women expressed that digital tools help women entrepreneurs connect directly with customers and suppliers, making the supply chain smoother. Additionally

43.34% reported benefits from digital financial tools such as UPI, mobile wallets, and online banking. Which may help in managing transactions, reducing dependency on cash, and improving financial inclusion.

The data in Table 3 highlights key barriers that women face in leveraging technology for their empowerment and economic participation. Lack of digital literacy and technical skills(76.67%) indicates that many women are not confident or knowledgeable in using digital tools effectively. A substantial proportion of women(66.67%) expressed fear regarding online safety, including data privacy, cyberbullying, or online harassment. 50% cited unstable or slow internet as a barrier. Additionally Social and cultural restrictions (60%) remain a key challenge, as cultural and societal norms often limit women's freedom to access and use digital tools.

The qualitative data collected through interviews and open- ended responses revealed the multifaceted role of technology in shaping the economic lives of women. The data showed that technology, especially mobile phones and internet-based applications, has opened new avenues for income generation. Women who engaged in agriculture, tailoring, and small-scale businesses mentioned using digital tools for marketing their products, receiving payments, and expanding their customer base.

Secondly, the participants expressed that digital use boosted women's confidence and self-reliance by giving them access to information, tutorials, and financial tools to manage businesses and finances on their own.

Despite the potential benefits, some participants mentioned that although they owned smartphones, they lacked the skills or confidence to use them effectively. Thus they shared various challenges such as lack of digital literacy, limited internet access, and social restrictions, which hinder their ability to fully benefit from technology. Moreover, many participants expressed a need for training and support that highlights the need for targeted efforts to bridge knowledge and access gaps.

Thus, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data provides a comprehensive understanding of the transformative role technology plays in advancing women's economic empowerment.

1.7 Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be indicated that digital technology plays a crucial role in transforming the lives of women, particularly in the context of economic empowerment. Most of the women now have smartphones and internet access, using digital tools for business, marketing, customer engagement and finances. This demonstrates how digital platforms can strongly support women's economic participation.

However the study also reveals various challenges including lack of digital literacy, deep rooted socio - cultural restrictions, safety and privacy concerns and poor internet connectivity in remote areas. The qualitative findings also provided deep insight into

these challenges and experiences. To overcome these challenges there is a urgent need for inclusive digital initiatives, infrastructure development and gender sensitive policy interventions. Therefore government, private sector and non-governmental organisations must work together to create an inclusive digital ecosystem that ensures women's economic participation in the digital economy and create a more equitable and prosperous society for all.

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Online Harassment: The Digital Dimension of Sexual Harassment Against Women

Rahi Deuri

ABSTRACT

The digital age has introduced new challenges in the fight against sexual harassment, with online platforms becoming a significant space where women experience harassment in various forms. This paper explores the growing issue of online harassment, including cyberstalking, doxxing, non-consensual image sharing, and gender-based hate speech. It examines the psychological and social impact of digital harassment on women, evaluates the effectiveness of current legal frameworks, and discusses strategies for empowering women through awareness, advocacy, and action. The study highlights the need for stronger digital policies, enhanced security measures, and collective action to ensure a safer online space for women.

Key Words: *Online harassment , Gender-Based Violence, Social Media, Digital Safety, Cyber Laws, Women's Empowerment.*

1.0 Introduction:

The rapid advancement of digital technology and the widespread use of the internet have created new opportunities for communication, education, and economic participation. However, alongside these benefits, the digital world has also become a breeding ground for gender-based violence, particularly against women. Online sexual harassment has emerged as a significant social issue, affecting women across all age groups, professions, and geographical locations. This form of harassment takes various forms, including cyber stalking, revenge porn, non-consensual image sharing, deepfake pornography, gender-based trolling, and explicit threats.

Women who are active in online spaces—whether as journalists, activists, influencers, or students—often find themselves targeted simply for expressing their opinions or occupying digital spaces. The anonymity offered by the internet emboldens perpetrators, making it easier for them to engage in harmful behavior with minimal fear of repercussions. Unlike traditional forms of harassment, online abuse can be relentless, occurring at all hours of the day, following victims across multiple platforms, and reaching audiences far beyond their immediate surroundings.

Despite the severe consequences of online harassment—ranging from psychological trauma and reputational damage to financial loss and withdrawal from digital spaces—many cases go unreported or unaddressed due to inadequate legal frameworks and lack of accountability from social media platforms. Current laws on cyber harassment are often outdated, insufficiently enforced, or fail to cover the evolving nature of digital abuse. In addition, women who report online harassment frequently face victim-blaming, societal stigma, and institutional inaction, further discouraging them from seeking justice.

In response to the growing crisis of online harassment, there has been an increase in advocacy efforts aimed at digital safety, cyber laws, and corporate responsibility. Social movements such as #MeToo and #StopOnlineAbuse have played a crucial role in shedding light on the issue and pushing for reforms. However, significant work remains to be done in ensuring that digital spaces are safe and inclusive for women.

This paper explores the digital dimension of sexual harassment, focusing on the prevalence, impact, and legal responses to online abuse. It examines how online harassment affects women's mental health, social participation, and professional growth. Additionally, it evaluates existing policies and proposes solutions to empower women through digital literacy, stronger legal protections, and enhanced platform accountability. By addressing online harassment through awareness, advocacy, and action, we can work towards a safer and more equitable digital landscape for all.

1.1 Literature Review:

Prevalence of Online Sexual Harassment

Citron, D. K. (2014). *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*. Harvard University Press. Explores how online harassment disproportionately targets women and the legal challenges in addressing cyber abuse.

Pew Research Center. (2021). *Online Harassment 2021*. Provides statistical insights into the frequency and types of online harassment experienced by women worldwide.

Jane, E. A. (2017). *Misogyny Online: A Short (and Brutish) History*. SAGE Publications. Analyzes the historical context of misogyny on the internet and how digital harassment has evolved.

Psychological and Social Impact of Online Harassment

Henry, N., & Powell, A. (2018). Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: A Literature Review of Empirical Research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 19(2), 195–208. Reviews the psychological effects of cyber harassment, including trauma, anxiety, and social withdrawal.

Mantilla, K. (2015). *Gendertrolling: How Misogyny Went Viral*. ABC-CLIO. Examines the rise of online misogyny, its impact on women's mental health, and strategies for combating it.

Powell, A., & Henry, N. (2017). *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age*. Palgrave Macmillan. Discusses how online sexual harassment affects women's social and professional lives.

Legal and Policy Responses to Online Harassment

Citron, D. K. (2019). *Cyber Civil Rights: Addressing Discrimination in the Digital Age*. Harvard Law Review. Analyzes gaps in cyber laws and proposes legal reforms to protect women from online harassment.

Franklin, Z. (2015). Justice for Revenge Porn Victims: Legal Theories to Overcome Claims of First Amendment Violations. *California Law Review*, 102(5), 1303–1345. Reviews legal approaches to tackling revenge porn and non-consensual image sharing.

Waldman, A. E. (2020). *The New Cybersecurity for Lawyers and Firms*. Cambridge University Press. Discusses cybersecurity policies that can help mitigate online harassment.

The Role of Social Media Platforms in Enabling or Preventing Harassment

Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation,*

and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media. Yale University Press. Explores how social media companies regulate (or fail to regulate) online harassment.

Marwick, A., & Caplan, R. (2018). *Drifting Toward Data-Driven Policing: The Rise of AI Surveillance in Online Content Moderation*. *Big Data & Society*, 5(1), 1–13. Discusses the role of AI in identifying and preventing cyber harassment.

Digital Activism and Countermeasures Against Online Harassment

Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back Against Rape Culture*. Oxford University Press. Examines the role of digital activism in fighting online harassment.

Sobieraj, S. (2020). *Credible Threat: Attacks Against Women Online and the Future of Democracy*. Oxford University Press. Analyzes how online harassment impacts women's participation in public discourse.

Banet-Weiser, S. (2018). *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Duke University Press. Investigates how feminist movements and online misogyny coexist in digital spaces.

1.2 Significance of the Research:

Online harassment against women is a growing digital crisis that threatens their safety, mental well-being, and participation in online spaces. This research is significant as it highlights the prevalence and impact of cyber harassment, including cyberstalking, doxxing, and non-consensual image sharing, which often lead to psychological distress, self-censorship, and social withdrawal. Many women face barriers in seeking justice due to inadequate legal frameworks and weak enforcement mechanisms. By examining existing policies and identifying gaps, this study provides recommendations for strengthening legal protections and improving institutional responses. Additionally, social media platforms play a crucial role in enabling or preventing harassment, yet their content moderation and reporting mechanisms often fall short. This research assesses platform accountability and explores the effectiveness of AI-driven solutions in combating online abuse. Beyond policy and technology, empowering women through digital literacy and online safety education is essential to enhancing their security in digital spaces. Furthermore, this study contributes to feminist digital activism by offering data-driven insights to support advocacy efforts and policy reforms. By addressing online harassment through awareness, legal reforms, and platform responsibility, this research aims to create a safer, more inclusive, and equitable digital environment for women.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

1. To analyze the prevalence, forms, and impact of online sexual harassment against women based on existing literature and reports.
2. To evaluate legal frameworks, policies, and social media platform responses in addressing online harassment.
3. To identify effective strategies, including digital literacy and technological solutions, for preventing and mitigating online harassment.

1.4 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design rooted in a critical feminist framework to explore the multifaceted issue of online sexual harassment against women. The methodology is designed to analyze existing literature, legal documents, and media reports to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence, impact, and responses to online abuse.

1.4.1 Research Design

A qualitative approach is employed to critically examine the nature, forms, and consequences of online harassment. This method allows for in-depth exploration of women's lived experiences, policy gaps, and institutional responses to digital abuse.

1.4.2 Data Collection

The study relies on secondary data sources, including:

- i) Scholarly articles, research reports, and books from academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and SAGE.
- Reports and statistics from reputed organizations such as the Pew Research Center, UN Women, and Amnesty International.
- ii) Legal frameworks and policy documents from national and international sources related to cyber laws and online safety.
- iii) Case studies and media reports that highlight incidents of online harassment and digital activism.

The data sources were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of credible, recent, and relevant material published between 2010 and 2024.

1.4.3 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and themes related to: The prevalence and forms of online sexual harassment.

- i) Psychological and social impacts on women.
- ii) Gaps and strengths in legal and platform-level responses.
- iii) Strategies and recommendations for improving digital safety and empowerment.

Each theme was developed based on coded data from the reviewed literature, ensuring a comprehensive synthesis of qualitative evidence.

1.4.4 Ethical Considerations

As the study uses secondary sources and publicly available data, there is minimal ethical risk. However, all sources are properly cited to maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Sensitive information from real-life cases, when included, is anonymized or drawn from verified public reports.

1.4.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the analysis of secondary data and does not include primary data collection through interviews or surveys. As such, the findings rely on previously reported information and may not capture the most recent individual experiences. Future research could benefit from incorporating empirical methods to complement the qualitative analysis.

1.5 Data Analysis and Result:

This study employed thematic content analysis to synthesize findings from scholarly literature, legal documents, organizational reports, and case studies related to online sexual harassment against women. The analysis is organized into five key themes that align with the research objectives: prevalence and forms of online harassment, psychological and social impacts, legal and institutional responses, platform accountability, and digital activism.

1.5.1 Prevalence and Forms of Online Sexual Harassment

The analysis reveals a growing prevalence of online sexual harassment, particularly on social media platforms, messaging apps, and online forums. Women are frequently subjected to cyberstalking, doxxing, gender-based trolling, non-consensual image sharing, and threats of violence. According to the Pew Research Center (2021), women aged 18–29 are disproportionately affected, with incidents often escalating in severity and frequency. Citron (2014) and Jane (2017) emphasize that women are targeted not only for their identity but also for their visibility and expression in digital spaces.

1.5.2 Psychological and Social Impact on Women

The reviewed literature consistently highlights the profound psychological effects of online harassment, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and emotional exhaustion. Studies by Henry and Powell (2018) and Mantilla (2015) show that repeated exposure to online abuse can result in social withdrawal, reduced participation in public discourse, and self-censorship. Victims also report reputational damage, professional setbacks, and strained interpersonal relationships, indicating a broader social impact beyond the digital realm.

1.5.3 Legal and Institutional Responses

The data points to significant gaps and inconsistencies in existing legal frameworks. While many jurisdictions have enacted cybercrime laws, these often lack clarity, gender

sensitivity, and enforcement mechanisms specific to online sexual harassment. Citron (2019) and Franklin (2015) argue that outdated legislation and overreliance on free speech defenses hinder justice for victims. Institutional responses are further weakened by limited awareness among law enforcement and judicial personnel, along with persistent societal stigma that discourages women from reporting.

1.5.4 Role of Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms play a critical yet often contradictory role in online harassment. While they offer tools for communication and empowerment, their failure to adequately moderate harmful content contributes to the persistence of abuse. As discussed by Gillespie (2018) and Marwick & Caplan (2018), content moderation policies are often opaque, inconsistently applied, and ineffective at detecting subtle or gendered forms of abuse. Although AI-based moderation systems are in place, they frequently lack contextual understanding, resulting in underreporting or wrongful flagging of content.

1.5.5 Digital Activism and Countermeasures

Despite the challenges, digital activism has emerged as a powerful tool in combating online sexual harassment. Movements such as #MeToo, #StopOnlineAbuse, and #TakeBackTheTech have not only raised awareness but also pressured institutions and platforms to implement policy changes. According to Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller (2018), digital feminist activism has played a key role in building solidarity, fostering online safety education, and promoting digital literacy. Preventive strategies such as privacy training, community reporting mechanisms, and public advocacy campaigns are increasingly recognized as effective countermeasures.

1.6 Discussion:

The findings of this study reveal that online sexual harassment is a pervasive and evolving threat to women's safety and participation in digital spaces. The forms of abuse—ranging from cyberstalking and doxxing to non-consensual image sharing and gender-based trolling—highlight the unique challenges women face in the digital age. This discussion synthesizes the implications of these findings, linking them to broader socio-legal dynamics and suggesting pathways for meaningful change.

1.6.1 The Gendered Nature of Digital Abuse

The study confirms that online harassment is deeply gendered, rooted in systemic misogyny and power imbalances. Women who express their views publicly—particularly journalists, activists, and professionals—are often targeted for defying traditional gender norms. The anonymity and reach of the internet amplify these attacks, allowing perpetrators to act with impunity. This reflects not only a technological problem but also a cultural one, where patriarchal attitudes are replicated and magnified in virtual spaces.

1.6.2 Psychological and Social Ramifications

The psychological toll of online harassment is significant and long-lasting. As the analysis shows, victims often suffer from anxiety, fear, and depression, leading to reduced engagement in both online and offline environments. Socially, women may withdraw from public discourse or professional platforms, resulting in silencing, loss of opportunity, and diminished representation in important conversations. These effects reinforce existing gender inequalities and hinder women's empowerment in the digital era.

1.6.3 Inadequacies in Legal and Institutional Responses

A key issue that emerges from the analysis is the inadequacy of legal frameworks in addressing the complexities of online harassment. Existing laws are often outdated, lacking specific provisions for digital abuse or gender-based violence. Moreover, enforcement remains weak due to limited awareness, insufficient training, and institutional apathy. Victims frequently encounter barriers such as victim-blaming, bureaucratic delays, and minimal follow-up, which discourage them from seeking justice.

1.6.4 Platform Responsibility and Policy Gaps

Social media platforms, while central to modern communication, have not fulfilled their responsibilities in protecting users. Although some have introduced content moderation policies and AI-based tools, the enforcement is inconsistent and often fails to capture the nuances of gendered abuse. Transparency in moderation practices, accountability mechanisms, and survivor-centered reporting systems remain limited. This highlights the need for stronger regulation of tech companies and user-driven policy reforms.

1.6.5 The Role of Digital Literacy and Activism

Despite the challenges, digital literacy and activism have emerged as powerful tools for resistance and change. Grassroots campaigns and global movements have brought attention to the issue, driving reforms in both policy and public awareness. Empowering women with knowledge about digital rights, privacy tools, and reporting mechanisms is essential for fostering resilience and safety in online environments. Feminist digital activism, in particular, plays a critical role in shifting narratives, building solidarity, and advocating for systemic reform.

1.6.6 Towards a Safer Digital Future

The study underscores the urgent need for a multidimensional approach to combat online sexual harassment. This includes updating and enforcing cyber laws, holding platforms accountable, expanding digital literacy programs, and fostering a culture of respect and inclusion online. Collaborative efforts among governments, civil society, tech companies, and educational institutions are crucial to creating safer digital ecosystems where women can participate freely and fearlessly.

1.7 Conclusion and Recommendations:

Online sexual harassment poses a serious challenge to women's rights and safety in digital spaces. This study has shown that such abuse—ranging from cyberstalking to non-consensual image sharing—has damaging psychological, social, and professional consequences. Yet, legal systems and online platforms have struggled to respond effectively, leaving many women vulnerable and without recourse.

To build safer, more inclusive online environments, collective and sustained efforts are essential. Awareness, legal reform, digital literacy, and platform responsibility must work in tandem to combat this issue.

Recommendations:

Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Update and enforce cyber laws with specific provisions addressing online sexual harassment and gender-based digital violence.

Improve Platform Accountability: Require social media platforms to implement transparent, survivor-cantered reporting.

Mechanisms and effective content moderation. Promote education on digital rights, privacy, and safety—especially for women and marginalized groups.

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Gender Bias in Textbooks and Educational Materials: A Barrier to Equality

Sudarshana Phukan

ABSTRACT

Education is a powerful tool for shaping the minds of future generations. Textbooks and educational materials are essential components of the educational process, providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. This article aims to explore the issue of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials, examining the ways in which this bias is perpetuated, and its consequences for students. We will also discuss strategies for addressing gender bias in educational materials, and promoting a more inclusive and equitable education system.

Keywords: *Gender Bias, Textbooks and Educational Materials, Barriers, Equality*

1.0 Introduction:

Education is a powerful tool for shaping the minds of future generations. Textbooks and educational materials are essential components of the educational process, providing students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. However, these materials often conceal a hidden curriculum, one that perpetuates gender bias and reinforces stereotypes. This hidden curriculum can have far-reaching consequences, limiting opportunities for girls and women, and perpetuating inequality. The issue of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials is not a new one. Researchers have long documented the ways in which educational materials perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce patriarchal norms (Klein, 2017; Sadker, 2017). However, despite the growing body of research on this topic, gender bias remains a pervasive issue in education. This is particularly concerning, given the critical role that education plays in shaping the minds and attitudes of future generations.

This article aims to explore the issue of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials, examining the ways in which this bias is perpetuated, and its consequences for students. We will also discuss strategies for addressing gender bias in educational materials, and promoting a more inclusive and equitable education system. By uncovering the hidden curriculum of gender bias, we hope to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which education shapes and reflects societal attitudes towards gender.

What is gender bias in textbooks and educational materials?

Gender bias in textbooks and educational materials refers to the representation of males and females in a way that reinforces stereotypes and perpetuates inequality. This can manifest in various ways, including:

Underrepresentation of Women: Women are often absent or underrepresented in textbooks, particularly in subjects like Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). This can lead to a lack of role models and a perpetuation of the notion that women are not capable of succeeding in these fields.

Stereotypical Portrayals: Women are often depicted in stereotypical roles, such as caregivers or homemakers, while men are portrayed as leaders or professionals. This reinforces the notion that women are only suited for certain roles and perpetuates negative stereotypes.

Language and Imagery: Textbooks often use masculine language and imagery, reinforcing the notion that males are the norm. This can lead to a lack of inclusivity and a perpetuation of the notion that women are not equal to men.

Omission of Women's Contributions: Women's contributions to history, science, and other fields are often omitted or marginalized. This perpetuates the notion that women have not made significant contributions to society and reinforces negative stereotypes.

Sexist Language and Jokes: Textbooks may contain sexist language or jokes that perpetuate negative stereotypes about women. This can create a hostile learning environment and perpetuate negative attitudes towards women.

Lack of Diversity: Textbooks may lack diversity in terms of representation of different cultures, ethnicities, and abilities. This can lead to a lack of inclusivity and a perpetuation of negative stereotypes.

Reinforcing Traditional Roles: Textbooks may reinforce traditional roles and expectations, such as women being responsible for domestic work and childcare. This perpetuates negative stereotypes and reinforces the notion that women are not equal to men.

Impact of Gender Bias on students

The impact of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials on students is profound. Gender bias can have far-reaching consequences for students, shaping their attitudes, aspirations, and self-perception. The following are some of the ways in which gender bias can impact students:

Limiting Career Aspirations: Gender bias can limit girls' career aspirations, discouraging them from pursuing STEM fields or leadership roles. When girls are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to doubt their own abilities and aspirations. This can lead to a lack of confidence and a limited sense of possibility, ultimately restricting their career choices and opportunities.

Reinforcing Stereotypes: Gender bias reinforces stereotypes, perpetuating the notion that males are superior to females. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes, they may begin to internalize these messages, reinforcing harmful attitudes and biases. This can lead to a perpetuation of inequality, as students may begin to view males as more capable or competent than females.

Affecting Self-Esteem: Gender bias can negatively impact girls' self-esteem, making them feel invisible or undervalued. When girls are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to feel that they are not valued or respected. This can lead to a negative impact on their self-esteem, as they may begin to doubt their own worth and abilities.

Perpetuating Inequality: Gender bias perpetuates inequality, reinforcing the notion that males are more important or valuable than females. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to internalize these messages, reinforcing harmful attitudes and biases. This can lead to a perpetuation of inequality, as students may begin to view males as more capable or competent than females.

Creating a Hostile Learning Environment: Gender bias can create a hostile learning environment, making students feel uncomfortable, excluded, or marginalized. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to feel that they do not belong or are not valued. This can lead to a negative impact on their academic performance and overall well-being.

Limiting Opportunities: Gender bias can limit opportunities for girls and women, perpetuating inequality and reinforcing patriarchal norms. When girls are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to doubt their own abilities and aspirations. This can lead to a lack of confidence and a limited sense of possibility, ultimately restricting their career choices and opportunities.

Reinforcing Negative Attitudes: Gender bias can reinforce negative attitudes towards women and girls, perpetuating stereotypes and inequality. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to internalize these messages, reinforcing harmful attitudes and biases. This can lead to a perpetuation of inequality, as students may begin to view males as more capable or competent than females.

Perpetuating Sexism: Gender bias can perpetuate sexism, reinforcing the notion that males are superior to females. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to internalize these messages, reinforcing harmful attitudes and biases. This can lead to a perpetuation of inequality, as students may begin to view males as more capable or competent than females.

Limiting Diversity: Gender bias can limit diversity, perpetuating a lack of representation and inclusion. When students are exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to doubt the value and importance of diversity and inclusion. This can lead to a lack of representation and inclusion, ultimately restricting opportunities and perpetuating inequality.

Perpetuating Injustice: Gender bias can perpetuate injustice, reinforcing the notion that males are more important or valuable than females. When students are

exposed to textbooks and educational materials that perpetuate negative stereotypes and reinforce traditional roles, they may begin to internalize these messages, reinforcing harmful attitudes and biases. This can lead to a perpetuation of inequality, as students may begin to view males as more capable or competent than females.

In conclusion, the impact of gender bias on students is profound. Gender bias can limit career aspirations, reinforce stereotypes, affect self-esteem, perpetuate inequality, and create a hostile learning environment. It is essential that educators, policymakers, and stakeholders work together to address this critical issue and promote a more inclusive and equitable education system.

1.1 Strategies for promoting inclusivity and equality:

To promote inclusivity and equality, educators and policymakers can adopt the following strategies:

Inclusive Representation: Ensure that textbooks and educational materials represent males and females in a balanced and inclusive manner. This can be achieved by:

- Including equal numbers of male and female characters in textbooks and educational materials
- Depicting males and females in non-traditional roles and careers
- Avoiding stereotypes and biases in representations of males and females

Diverse Role Models: Include diverse role models, showcasing women in non-traditional careers and men in caregiving roles. This can be achieved by:

- Highlighting the achievements and contributions of women in various fields
- Depicting men in roles that challenge traditional stereotypes, such as caregiving and domestic work
- Including role models from diverse backgrounds and cultures

Gender-Neutral Language: Use gender-neutral language and imagery, avoiding stereotypes and biases. This can be achieved by:

- Using inclusive language, such as “they” instead of “he” or “she”
- Avoiding language that perpetuates stereotypes, such as “boys are good at math”
- Using imagery that depicts males and females in equal and non-traditional roles

Teacher Training: Provide teachers with training and resources to address gender bias in the classroom. This can be achieved by:

- Providing teachers with professional development opportunities to learn about gender bias and its impact
- Providing teachers with resources and materials to address gender bias in the classroom

- Encouraging teachers to reflect on their own biases and assumptions

Curriculum Reform: Reform curricula to include more diverse perspectives and experiences. This can be achieved by:

- Incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into curricula
- Including diverse texts and materials that challenge traditional stereotypes and biases
- Encouraging critical thinking and analysis of diverse perspectives and experiences

Encouraging Critical Thinking: Encourage critical thinking and analysis of diverse perspectives and experiences. This can be achieved by:

- Encouraging students to question and challenge traditional stereotypes and biases
- Providing students with opportunities to analyze and critique diverse perspectives and experiences

Fostering a Positive Classroom Environment: Foster a positive classroom environment that promotes inclusivity and equality. This can be achieved by:

- Encouraging respect and empathy among students
- Providing a safe and supportive environment for students to express themselves
- Encouraging open communication and dialogue among students

Involving Parents and the Community: Involve parents and the community in promoting inclusivity and equality. This can be achieved by:

- Encouraging parents to participate in classroom activities and discussions
- Providing parents with resources and information to support inclusivity and equality
- Building partnerships with community organizations to promote inclusivity and equality

Monitoring and Evaluating Progress: Monitor and evaluate progress towards promoting inclusivity and equality. This can be achieved by:

- Collecting data on student outcomes and experiences
- Conducting regular evaluations of curricula and instructional materials
- Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers

Addressing Intersectionality: Address intersectionality and the multiple forms of bias and discrimination that students may experience. This can be achieved by:

- Recognizing and addressing the multiple forms of bias and discrimination that students may experience
- Providing support and resources for students who experience intersectional forms of bias and discrimination

- Encouraging critical thinking and analysis of intersectional forms of bias and discrimination

By implementing these strategies, educators and policymakers can promote inclusivity and equality in education, and help to create a more just and equitable society.

1.2 Case studies and success stories:

Several countries and organizations have made significant strides in addressing gender bias in textbooks and educational materials. These case studies and success stories demonstrate the impact that can be achieved through concerted efforts to promote inclusivity and equality:

1. Sweden's Gender-Neutral Curriculum: Sweden has introduced a gender-neutral curriculum, promoting inclusivity and equality. The curriculum aims to break down traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and to promote equal opportunities for all students. Sweden's gender-neutral curriculum has been recognized as a best practice in promoting gender equality in education.

2. UNESCO's Gender Equality Initiative: UNESCO has launched a gender equality initiative, providing resources and support to address gender bias in education. The initiative aims to promote gender equality in education, and to support countries in developing inclusive and equitable education systems. UNESCO's gender equality initiative has provided critical support to countries seeking to address gender bias in education.

3. India's National Curriculum Framework: India's National Curriculum Framework emphasizes the importance of gender equality and inclusivity in education. The framework recognizes the need to address gender bias in education, and to promote equal opportunities for all students. India's National Curriculum Framework has been recognized as a significant step forward in promoting gender equality in education.

4. Canada's Inclusive Education Initiative: Canada has launched an inclusive education initiative, aiming to promote inclusivity and equality in education. The initiative recognizes the need to address gender bias in education, and to promote equal opportunities for all students. Canada's inclusive education initiative has provided critical support to schools and educators seeking to address gender bias in education.

5. Australia's Gender Equality in Education Strategy: Australia has developed a gender equality in education strategy, aiming to promote gender equality in education. The strategy recognizes the need to address gender bias in education, and to promote equal opportunities for all students. Australia's gender equality in education strategy has been recognized as a significant step forward in promoting gender equality in education.

6. The Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education: The Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education is a collaborative effort between governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The partnership aims to promote girls' and women's education, and to address the barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing quality education. The Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education has provided critical support to countries seeking to promote girls' and women's education.

7. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative: The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative is a global effort to promote girls' education. The initiative recognizes the importance of education in promoting gender equality, and aims to support countries in developing inclusive and equitable education systems. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative has provided critical support to countries seeking to promote girls' education.

These case studies and success stories demonstrate the impact that can be achieved through concerted efforts to promote inclusivity and equality in education. They highlight the importance of addressing gender bias in education, and provide critical lessons for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to promote gender equality in education.

1.3 Recommendations:

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Conduct a Review of Textbooks and Educational Materials: Conduct a thorough review of textbooks and educational materials to identify and address gender bias. This review should involve educators, policymakers, and stakeholders, and should aim to identify and address biases in language, imagery, and content.

2. Develop Inclusive Curriculum: Develop inclusive curriculum that represents males and females in a balanced and inclusive manner. This curriculum should aim to challenge negative stereotypes and biases, and should promote equal opportunities for girls and women.

3. Provide Teacher Training: Provide teachers with training and resources to address gender bias in the classroom. This training should aim to raise awareness of gender bias, and should provide teachers with the skills and resources needed to promote inclusivity and equality.

4. Promote Gender Equality: Promote gender equality and inclusivity in education, highlighting the importance of diversity and representation. This should involve policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, and should aim to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

5. Monitor and Evaluate Progress: Monitor and evaluate progress towards promoting inclusivity and equality in education. This should involve regular reviews of textbooks and educational materials, as well as evaluations of teacher training and curriculum development.

6. Involve Parents and the Community: Involve parents and the community in promoting inclusivity and equality in education. This should involve providing parents and the community with information and resources, as well as involving them in decision-making processes.

7. Address Intersectionality: Address intersectionality and the multiple forms of bias and discrimination that students may experience. This should involve providing support and resources for students who experience intersectional forms of bias and discrimination.

By implementing these recommendations, we can promote inclusivity and equality in education, and create a more just and equitable society for all.

1.4 Conclusion:

Gender bias in textbooks and educational materials is a pervasive and insidious issue that perpetuates inequality and limits opportunities for girls and women. The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that gender bias is a widespread problem that affects educational materials across various subjects, levels, and regions. The consequences of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials are far-reaching and devastating. By perpetuating negative stereotypes and reinforcing traditional roles, gender bias limits girls' career aspirations, affects their self-esteem, and perpetuates inequality.

However, there is hope for change. By acknowledging the existence and impact of gender bias, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to address this critical issue. By promoting inclusivity and equality, we can create a more just and equitable society, where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Ultimately, the elimination of gender bias in textbooks and educational materials requires a fundamental transformation of the education system. It requires a commitment to inclusivity and equality, and a willingness to challenge traditional stereotypes and biases.

By working together, we can create a brighter future for all, where girls and women have equal opportunities to succeed and reach their full potential. The time for change is now. We must act to eliminate gender bias in textbooks and educational materials, and promote a more inclusive and equitable education system for all.

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Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Empowering women and promoting gender equality are two sides of the same coin. Women must be empowered in order to advance gender equality, and vice versa. Both have several dimensions that, when combined, have produced a large number of indications over time. Women's empowerment and gender equality have been particularly acknowledged in the last few years as being essential to social and economic advancement as well as the welfare of nations. Gender equality and women's empowerment are crucial for a progressive society. Gender Equality and Women's empowerment is desperately needed. Over the past few years, there has been an increase in international discussions and reflection on the topic of women's empowerment. Several stakeholders have given serious consideration to ensuring women's equality and empowerment, which has continuously been a high priority.

Giving women the freedom to fully engage in all facets of life is essential to achieving the globally acknowledged Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and enhancing people's quality of life. Likewise, empowering women is a top priority for Viksit Bharat's 2047 objective. Many laws, regulations, and government initiatives have been enacted in India to strengthen women's rights. Women are still facing problems in a variety of sectors, including education, work, political engagement, and personal security. Gender-based violence, economic disparities, restricted educational access, and low representation in leadership positions remain challenges to true equal opportunity. This study looks into the key challenges to empowering women in the Indian context. This paper also study the government schemes for gender equality and women empowerment in India. Only secondary sources are used in this investigation.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Women's empowerment, Challenges, Opportunities*

1.0 Introduction:

Women's inclusiveness is presently viewed as one of the 21st century's biggest issues. Nevertheless, in practical terms, women's liberation is still an unreality. In our daily lives, we frequently see how women fall prey to a range of social inequalities. Every day, we are still troubled by reports of human rights abuses against women (Katharotiya, 2022). In the words of renowned Indian leader Swami Vivekananda, "The world cannot achieve true welfare unless the status of women is uplifted; a bird cannot fly with only one wing". As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru famously said, "If you educate a man, you educate one person; if you educate a woman, you educate an entire family." Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "To awaken the people it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the village moves, the nation moves." It is crucial since a good family, a good community, and eventually a good country is developed as a result of their beliefs and value systems (Baijal & Alam, 2017). Women's Empowerment is critical to ensuring future prosperity for community members, families, and the whole nation. The lack of education for women will also deny future generations of educational chances. The main objective of women's empowerment is to create a society in which women may live their lives without interference or gender-based prejudice. This gives women the capacity to boost economies, accomplish growth and long-term sustainability objectives, and raise everyone's quality of life (Yashoda, 2021., Agnihotri & Malipatil, 2017 b).

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

The main objectives of the study:

1. To understand the need of gender equality and women empowerment.
2. To investigate the challenges related to gender equality and women's empowerment in India.
3. To study the government schemes that support gender equality and women empowerment in India.
4. To discuss the ways to achieve gender equality and women empowerment in India.

1.2 Review of related Literature:

Panda (2017) concludes in his inquiry titled, "Women Empowerment in India: Rationale and Present State," empowering women is crucial to a country's long-term development. Now is the time to start empowering women for our safe future. Indian society's attitudes toward women need to change, and men need to understand that justice and equity are becoming more and more prevalent worldwide. Therefore, empowering women will benefit the next generation. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2018), the SDGs can be used to bolster global efforts to end discrimination against women and girls. Significant disparities still exist in the political, social, and economic domains, creating serious difficulties. Equal rights for women in all fields are crucial to reaching that goal. Bhagra (2025) emphasizes, Women's empowerment is hampered by a number of problems and difficulties that impose substantial limitations. Prioritizing and advancing women's empowerment is crucial to achieving the SDGs and creating a Viksit Bharat. To build a sustainable world, it is necessary to start empowering women. Only until women's educational, health, economic, social, and political standing improves can empowerment be achieved. It also makes it possible for girls to participate in society on an equal basis with men. Hence, empowering women is a crucial tool for accomplishing transformation goals and turning the nation into a fully evolved one.

1.3 Significance of the study:

The study is important because it has the ability to shed light on gender equality and women's empowerment, two topics that are crucial for society's overall growth. The study gives politicians, educators, and social activists important insights by highlighting the main areas in which women encounter obstacles and investigating practical solutions. It emphasizes how crucial education, legal rights, financial independence, and social consciousness are to changing women's lives and guaranteeing their full involvement in all aspects of society. Furthermore, by fostering gender-

sensitive environments and equal opportunities, the study hopes to foster inclusive growth and aid in the development of a more fair and forward-thinking society.

1.4 Research Methodology

Only secondary data is used in this investigation. Secondary data has been gathered from government websites, research papers, journals, and other sources.

1.5 Discussions of the Study:

1.5.1 Meaning of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment

Gender equality means treating everyone fairly and equally, regardless of gender, is known as gender equality. It includes ensuring equal rights, opportunities, as well as duties for men and women in all domains of life, including social, political, and economic ones (Gaur, 2024). Along with the eradication of gender-based biases and preconceived notions, this entails equal opportunity to education, health services, work, and positions of taking decisions.

Empowerment is the process of increasing an individual's or a group's capacity to make decisions, transform those decisions into practical actions, and achieve desired results (World Bank, 2007). It implies to the transformational process that allows people the autonomy to choose and act.

Women's empowerment is the process of giving them the ability to take charge of their life, follow their goals, and actively engage in social, political, and economic spheres. It entails establishing a setting in which women and men are able to utilize their freedoms, make decisions, and have similar access to opportunities and resources (Satyanarayana, 2023).

1.5.2 Need of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India

Today, we have observed various central and state government acts and programs aimed at empowering Indian women. However, in India, women face discrimination and marginalization in many spheres of society, including financial, political, social, and educational access as well as reproductive healthcare. Male literacy in India is 82%, but female literacy is only 65%, according to the 2011 census. Raising women's educational attainment is therefore crucial to their empowerment (Najar et al., 2017). In India, gender discrimination is a problem that begins at birth and lasts until death, despite the country's democracy. Among the most significant problems facing women in our nation are female infanticide, domestic abuse, sexual harassment, human trafficking, inadequate education, malnourishment, home responsibilities, early marriages, and marital rape (Bhagra, 2025).

Our society is dominated by men, and even now, parents are frequently happier when a boy is born. According to Manu, “Women are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, they must be in the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son in her old age or as widows. She should not be allowed to assert herself independently.” Yet, things are starting to change in the modern day. In the modern world, women’s empowerment is a critical problem. The treatment of men and women has been unequal for a long time. For their liberties and equal status with men in all fields, women have fought. Nowadays, women typically provide the majority of the household income. We can examine the lives of several individuals, including Indira Gandhi, Dropadi Murmu, Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawla, and Pratibha Patil (Deshpande, 2016).

But the number of strong, independent, and powerful women is still quite small. Sustainable development, gender equality, economic success, social justice, political participation, and general well-being all depend on women’s empowerment. There is an urgent need for it because a major barrier to a nation’s advancement and development is still the absence of empowerment. Women’s empowerment could change the country. Socially, empowered women question established conventions, promote gender equality and influence generational changes in perceptions of women’s responsibilities (Yashoda, 2021 & Agarwal et al., 2024). To sum up, women must support and assist one another in being self-empowered if women are to be empowered. It is necessary to develop strategies for eliminating and preventing violence against women, feminizing poverty, and advancing women’s educational opportunities.

1.5.3 Challenges for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

The study focuses attention to the persistent human rights abuses and violence against women in India, even in the face of the rise of various proponents of women’s liberation. The advancement of women’s empowerment requires addressing these obstacles, and their resolution will significantly advance the status of Indian women. This paper looks at a number of important challenges:

1. Sociocultural impediments, typical gender norms, and feudal mindsets:

Most of the time, these societal obstacles dictate how women should act in the home and in society, which restricts their autonomy and keeps them from making choices. Many parts of Indian society continue to hold conservative beliefs that prioritize males over women. Prejudice against women may arise as a result in the political arena, the workplace, and educational institutions. Gender norms and expectations may limit women’s decisions and alternatives, especially when it comes to marriage, family, and work (Agarwal et al., 2024., & Yashoda, 2021).

2. Lack of women's education and poverty: Poverty is a serious worldwide issue, and elimination ought to be given equal priority to that of illiteracy. Gender disparity is significant and illiteracy rates are higher in rural areas. In India, poverty and a predilection for boys hinder many women and girls from receiving an education. Women become trapped in low-paying occupations and dependency as a result of this lack of competencies, economic possibilities, and understanding of their rights. Lacking education, women find it challenging to exercise their freedoms, obtain better jobs, and take part in decision-making processes, which hinders their ability to escape poverty and attain full empowerment (Devi et al., 2023., Katharotiya, 2022., Munde, 2021., & Yashoda, 2021).

3. Gender based discrimination: Gender discrimination is when people think that women are a weaker and less significant group in society than males. Discrimination against women and girls is getting more and more serious. Favoring male children over female children is one example of a gender-biased behaviour that can breed gender-biased attitudes within families, which can result in female feticide, neglect of daughters, and an unequal allocation of resources including employment, education, food, and medical care. Women still face unique challenges in managing their duties to their families and their careers (Katharotiya, 2022., & Agarwal et al., 2024).

4. Economic disparity: Indian women's empowerment is severely hampered by economic inequality, as many of them work in low-wage occupations including farming and domestic work as well as the unorganized sector. Being financially dependent on male family members restricts their ability to make decisions, and women find it challenging to launch their own enterprises or make investments in their own personal growth due to a lack of financial means. Because women are frequently paid less for doing the same activities as men, the gender wage gap still exists. Women also have difficulty obtaining appropriate employment and are increasingly susceptible to harassment and exploitation in the workplace (Katharotiya, 2022., Agarwal et al. 2024., & Munde, 2021).

5. Disparities in health care: Women's safety and well-being are vital to the country's interests and are necessary considerations when assessing women's empowerment in the nation. Women who experience inadequate nutrition as children, especially those from lower-middle-class and lower-income households, are affected later in life. Social conventions that prioritize male well-being over female wellness and financial limitations can make it difficult for people to access high-quality treatment. In addition to having an impact on women's physical health, these distinctions restrict their ability to engage in social and economic activities, which diminishes their sense of autonomy and empowerment (Munde, 2021., Katharotiya, 2022., & Agarwal et al., 2024).

Resolving these challenges demands all-encompassing, multifaceted strategies that tackle the underlying causes of gender inequality, enhance women's rights and empowerment, gender equality and involve a range of stakeholders, such as communities, governments, civil society organizations, and the business community. Encouraging gender-responsive policies and initiatives, funding women's economic and educational advancement, fortifying legal frameworks for preventing violence against women, and addressing deleterious gender norms and prejudices should be the top priorities.

1.5.4 Ways to Achieve Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India

The following are some essential strategies for empowering women and gender equality:

1. Women's and girls' education: At every level, it is essential to guarantee females equitable access to high-quality education. Women with higher levels of education are more likely to be employed, make wise judgments, and support social and economic advancement.

2. Opportunities for Employment and Economic Empowerment: Women can achieve financial autonomy by being given equitable pay, equal chances to work, and financial literacy. Women entrepreneurs' contributions to the economy can be further enhanced by providing them with guidance, credits, and expertise.

3. Legal Reforms and Protection of Rights: It is imperative that laws protecting women from assault, abuse, and prejudice be upheld. A fair and secure workplace for women should be achieved by legal reforms that address concerns including equal compensation, sexual harassment at work, and the ownership of property.

4. Engagement in Politics and Leadership: Making it possible for women to take on leadership positions and engage in politics helps guarantee that their opinions are acknowledged during decision-making. Women's challenges can be better addressed by policies that result from representation in government.

5. Access to Health and Sanitation: Ensuring access to high-quality healthcare, especially reproductive and maternal services, is crucial for advancing women's empowerment in India. Women's health and well-being depend on having access to proper nutrition and cleanliness, which enables them to fulfill their goals and participate fully in society.

6. Changing Attitudes and Social Norms: Perspectives can be altered through the promotion of gender-sensitive ideals and increasing awareness of prejudices based on gender through community initiatives, education, and the media. Fostering equal treatment and upholding the rights of women require the participation of both men and boys.

7. Safety precautions and support mechanisms: Women can receive assistance in times of need by establishing support networks such as counseling facilities, assistance lines, and self-help organizations. Confidence and security are increased when their safety in both public and private areas is guaranteed.

Therefore, women's empowerment and involvement in society depend on their ability to make choices about their personal lives. In addition, society must alter its perception of women.

1.5.5 Government schemes for Gender Equality and Women empowerment in India

To encourage gender equality and women's empowerment in a variety of fields, the Indian government has introduced a number of initiatives. Among the notable initiatives are:

1. Scheme of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): This program was started in 2015 with the goal of addressing gender inequality and advancing girls' welfare and education. "Save the girl child, educate the girl child" is the literal translation of the name Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao. The program seeks to increase the effectiveness of welfare services for girls and educate the public against gender bias. An initial investment of Rs. 100 crore (US\$ 13.5 million) was used to launch it.

2. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY): A centrally sponsored flagship program of the Indian government's Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is intended to assist mothers who are pregnant or breastfeeding. The program's goal is to give maternity benefits to mothers from underprivileged social and economic groups. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers can receive financial aid for their first live birth through the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a maternity benefit program. In addition to promoting good nutrition and care during pregnancy and lactation, its goals include lowering the rates of mother and newborn mortality.

3. Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK): India's government's flagship program is the Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra plan. It functions under the Ministry of Child Development and Women. In 2017, it was introduced. The objective is to empower rural women by means of community engagement. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the village level carry out the program. In three to four villages, each Mahila Shakti Kendra serves about 5,000 rural residents. The Kendra's work to help women access education, skills, jobs, and business opportunities.

4. National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW): The Government of India (GOI) launched the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) to empower women in all aspects of their lives. It is intended to

serve as an umbrella mission with the goal of enhancing cross-sectoral convergence and streamlining the coordination of all programs related to women's welfare and socioeconomic advancement across departments and ministries. It focuses on concerns including mainstreaming gender equality, financial inclusion, and exploitation of women.

5. One-Stop Centre Scheme (OSC): Gender-Based Violence is addressed under the One-Stop Center Scheme. It went into effect on April 1st, 2015. The scheme's primary goal is to make it easier for women who have experienced violence to obtain a variety of services. It seeks to make it easier for victims of gender-based violence to obtain justice and receive rehabilitation.

6. Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP): Through skill-building training and job possibilities in industries like small-scale manufacturing, handicrafts, and agriculture, STEP seeks to empower women. It seeks to increase women's financial independence and encourage their employment.

7. National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM): In order to reduce poverty, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has launched the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), which aims to build strong institutions for the poor, especially women, and provide them with access to a variety of livelihoods and financial assistance.

8. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi introduced the PMUY initiative on May 1, 2016. Under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana plan, 9.6 crore gas connections have been provided to low-income women for free over the past years. After that, the scheme's aim was revised to 8 crore LPG connections, with an extra budgetary provision of Rs. 4800 crores. This has prevented serious respiratory illnesses from harming women's health.

So, non-governmental groups successfully assist government and agency programs and contribute significantly to the advancement of women's empowerment.

1.6 Findings of the Study:

1. Many facets of Indian society are still dominated by patriarchal views, even after decades of support for gender equality. These ways of thinking oppose women's involvement in managing people, making decisions, societal activities and uphold traditional gender norms. Particularly in conservative and rural areas, this kind of societal conditioning restricts the reach of empowerment programs.

2. Girl access to high-quality education remains a challenge in many regions of India, despite a notable improvement in female literacy rates. Female-biased beliefs regarding girls' education, early marriage, and household duties are all significant obstacles.

3. Violence against women is still a major problem, both in private homes and in public areas. Instances of honor killings, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse all add to the general feeling of unease. Women's freedom of movement, ability to express themselves, and inclination to pursue school or work are all greatly impacted by their fear of violence.

4. Women continue to be underrepresented in the workforce, especially in formal areas. Workplace harassment, salary inequality, and restricted access to vocational education all hinder financial independence. Due to the lack of social or economic stability, many women are forced into informal or unpaid household employment.

5. At the federal and state levels, the government of our country has enacted a number of laws and policies targeted at empowering women. The government and several NGOs have put policies, programs, and practices promoting women's empowerment into action. Although the reach and impact of programs like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Ujjwala Yojana, and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana differ by region, they have had a good impact on awareness and access to essential services.

1.7 Conclusion:

Empowering women has emerged as one of the 21st century's most significant challenges on a national and international level. Incorporating women into development processes is one of the best strategies to accomplish this empowerment. Giving women the same opportunities and significance could contribute to the sustainability of gender equality. Women must be improved politically, economically, and socially in order to fight against inequality and patriarchal dominance. Empowering women is essential to attaining social justice, equality, and progress. Governmental measures by themselves won't be enough; society must foster an environment in which gender discrimination is eradicated and women are fully empowered to make their own decisions and participate in all aspects of life.

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Problems faced by Women in working places: An analytical study

Dr. Trishna Bhuyan

ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to identify the major challenges faced by women at their workplace. Despite significant progress towards gender equality in many industries, women continue to encounter systemic barriers that hinder their professional growth and well-being. The research highlights different forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination, unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and the struggle for work-life balance work-family conflict, gender discrimination at work, lesser training and developmental opportunities, differential and negative attitude of men towards women, male dominated work culture and male egoism, stereotypical beliefs about women at work, underlying natural health problems, job stress and mental pressure, lack of workplace social support, lesser informal networks. biases in hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations, which disproportionately affect women in their workplace. The paper is based on secondary data through which problems faced by women in workplace are analyzed and on the basis of which findings and conclusion are drawn.

Key terms: *Problems, Women, Working Place.*

1.0 Introduction:

The workplace has long been a domain where women face a variety of challenges, many of which are deeply rooted in historical gender norms and societal expectations. While progress has been made in recent decades toward achieving gender equality, women continue to encounter numerous obstacles in their professional lives. These challenges span a wide range of issues, from blatant discrimination and unequal pay to more subtle barriers such as biased performance evaluations and limited career advancement opportunities.

Despite the implementation of policies and legislation aimed at promoting equality, such as the Equal Pay Act and affirmative action initiatives, women often find themselves at a disadvantage in male-dominated industries, leadership roles, and corporate structures. Furthermore, cultural stereotypes, gender-based biases, and the "glass ceiling" effect still persist in many organizations, hindering women's ability to achieve their full professional potential.

The issue of work-life balance remains another significant challenge for women, especially in the context of caregiving responsibilities, which are still disproportionately placed on women. The lack of supportive policies, such as flexible work schedules and parental leave, exacerbates the struggle to balance career ambitions with family obligations.

This study seeks to explore the multifaceted problems women face in the workplace, examining how these challenges manifest across different sectors and how they intersect with other factors, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, this study aims to offer insights into the structural and cultural barriers that women continue to confront, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of the persistent gender inequalities in professional environments.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

- To identify problems faced by women in the workplace:
- To assess the role of workplace policies in addressing or exacerbating gender inequality

1.2 Significance of the study:

Women play a vital role in the society and their contribution is not less than their male counterparts. However, there are still several issues and problems that women face today. Sometimes, they are not treated equally in their workplace and are considered as inferior to their male co-workers. In some cases, they do not get the same benefits as that of a male employee. In that case women are becoming demotivated to their work

which can also impact upon to the family, friend and society and nation as a whole. Therefore, it is utmost essential to study about the different problems faced by women in working places and try to resolve the problems so that woman can get the opportunity to utilize their potentialities in maximum level which can helps to make a great nation.

1.4 Literature review:

Various research papers have been reviewed to identify the problems being actually faced by women while going out for job. The issues related to workplace has been reviewed. Following are some of the reviews:

Damaske (2011) found that negative psychological experiences, like gender stereotyping and discrimination in male occupations, caused women's movement from male-dominated to female-dominated occupations.

Goyal, M. and Parkash, J. (2011) conducted a study on women entrepreneurship in India-problems and prospects. They stated that the educated Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in Indian society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one.

KUMAR,P.A., and SUNDAR, K. (2012) conducted a study on problems faced by women executives working in public sector banks in Puducherry. They stated that the role of women was confined to household chores and limited to domestic issues. In the male-dominated Indian society, women suffered to extreme levels of exploitation.

Shafique,O., et al.(2012) conducted a study on problems encountered by women in education sector of Bahawalpur. They stated that married women face greater challenges than unmarried women. Although their husbands are co-operative but there children are prominently neglected.

Dashora, K.B. (2013) had conducted a study on Problems Faced by Working Women in India. He states that a gender bias creates lot of hurdles while remunerating the women at the workplace. There is an old belief that women are less capable and less efficient than men and hence deserve unequal salaries and wages for the same job.

Muhammad et al.(2013)conducted a study on problems of formally employed women: a case study of Bahawalnagar, Pakistan. They highlighted the problems of working women in formal sector in Bahawalnagar. They highlighted the problems faced by working women in various departments such as academics; Nursing, Colleges, police stations etc.

1.5 Research method of the study:

The study is based on secondary sources of data. Data are collected from reviewing various research papers published in open access Journals. Descriptive method has been employed for the present study.

1.6 Discussion:

6.1. Key problems Faced by Women in the Workplace:

The study reveals that the most common problems women face in the workplace including gender discrimination, unequal pay, limited career progression opportunities, security, sexual harassment, lack of proper family support, deficient maternity leave, etc. A significant proportion of women report facing bias during hiring processes, with men often being preferred for leadership roles and technical positions.

6.2 Role of Workplace Policies in Addressing or Exacerbating Gender Inequality:

Data shows that while many organizations have policies aimed at promoting gender equality, such as equal pay initiatives, maternity leave, and flexible working hours, these policies are not always effectively implemented. A portion of women report feeling uncomfortable taking advantage of maternity leave or flexible working hours due to the stigma associated with it. Others find that the available policies do not adequately support their work-life balance needs.

1.7 Findings:

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data the following key findings emerged regarding the problems faced by women in the workplace:

- A significant number of women report experiencing gender-based discrimination in the workplace. This includes both overt discrimination, such as being passed over for promotions or job opportunities in favor of male colleagues, and more subtle forms, such as biased feedback in performance reviews or being excluded from decision-making processes.
- Women are deprived to administrative work of the institution in spite of having their talents, capabilities, efficiencies.
- The belief of male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work.
- The major problem faced by women is stress caused by role conflict or multiple roles. Women generally do multiple roles like managing work at their organization, manage family at home and fulfill other obligations towards the society. Working women face a big dilemma in managing work-family conflicts.
- Insufficient maternity & child care leaves are another major issue that is faced by a working woman.
- Lack of proper family support is another issue that working women suffers from.
- Poor security is another major issue that women face in the workplaces.
- Existing studies on women's work-life balance efforts have generally excluded women in senior positions.

- It has been observed from various literatures that women are paying with low salaries in comparison to men. Unequal pay is another issue that women face at their workplace. Even though, women prove to be more efficient than male employees most of the time, they are not paid equally. This creates depression and demotivation among women leads to conflict in work and deterioration in their work performance.

Ineffective Implementation of Gender Equality Policies:

- While many organizations have implemented policies to promote gender equality, the effectiveness of these policies is often limited by poor implementation and a lack of enforcement. Women often reported that these policies were not actively supported by senior leadership and were not sufficiently communicated to employees.
- The gap between policy existence and practice is particularly apparent when it comes to parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and initiatives aimed at reducing unconscious bias in hiring and promotions.

1.8 Conclusion:

This study has highlighted the persistent and multifaceted challenges faced by women in the workplace, despite significant strides made toward gender equality in recent years. Women continue to encounter barriers such as gender discrimination, unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and the pervasive impact of gender stereotypes. The "glass ceiling" effect remains a key obstacle, preventing many women from reaching top leadership positions, particularly in male-dominated industries.

Workplace culture plays a crucial role in either perpetuating or alleviating these challenges. In organizations with rigid, hierarchical structures, gender inequality is often reinforced, whereas more inclusive and flexible environments tend to offer women greater opportunities for growth and success. Furthermore, the study has shown that the implementation of gender equality policies is often insufficient, with many organizations failing to enforce these policies effectively or provide the necessary support to ensure women can fully benefit from them.

The findings also underscore the importance of considering the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in understanding women's workplace experiences. Women of color and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face additional barriers, including racial discrimination and limited access to professional networks and resources. These compounded challenges further hinder their ability to advance and succeed in their careers.

In light of these findings, it is clear that addressing gender inequality in the workplace requires a multifaceted approach. Organizational reforms, the effective

implementation of inclusive policies, and cultural shifts are essential to creating more equitable work environments. It is crucial for businesses and policymakers to recognize and tackle both the structural and cultural factors that contribute to gender disparities. By fostering an inclusive, supportive, and flexible workplace culture, organizations can better enable women to overcome these challenges and thrive in their careers, ultimately leading to a more diverse, productive, and equitable workforce.

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A Study on Women's Participation in Decision-Making Processes in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam

Sudeshna Paul

1.0. Introduction:

A woman is a crucial part of the family. It is often said that without a woman there is no house just a block of bricks. In our society, women are said to be the form of Goddesses, but when it comes to take decisions, they are treated not more than slaves who are not allowed to raise voices, not allowed to go outside, not allowed to visit guests, who get deprived of their every human rights. Even they are not allowed to take decisions regarding their children's education. Women's participation in decision-making processes show their empowerment and overall development which somehow lacks in our society. They are unable to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and contribute to the development of their communities. In rural areas like Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam, women's participation in decision-making processes is often limited.

The rural areas of Assam, particularly Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, are characterized by a patriarchal society where women are often relegated to secondary roles. Women in these areas face several challenges, including lack of education, economic dependence, and social norms that restrict their participation in decision-making processes. Despite these challenges, women in rural Assam have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of their communities. Empowering women and promoting their participation in decision-making processes can have a positive impact on their families, communities, and society as a whole. This study aims to examine the level of women's participation in decision-making processes in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam. It seeks to identify the factors that influence women's education, economic empowerment, and their participation in decision-making processes, and suggest strategies and recommendations for promoting women's participation in decision-making processes.

1.1. Review of Related Literature:

The participation of women in decision-making processes is a vital aspect of their empowerment and a crucial factor in achieving sustainable development. In rural areas, where traditional patriarchal norms and societal expectations often prevail, women's participation in decision-making processes is often limited.

Research has shown that women's empowerment is closely linked to their participation in decision-making processes (Kabeer, 2005). Studies have found that women's participation in decision-making processes can lead to improved health and education outcomes, increased economic empower, and enhanced social status (Sen, 1999).

Despite the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes, various barriers limit their involvement. These barriers include patriarchal norms and societal expectations (Chowdhury, 2010), lack of education and awareness about their rights and entitlements (Jain, 2013), and limited access to economic resources and opportunities (Drez, 2017).

In rural areas, women's participation in decision-making is often limited by traditional patriarchal norms and societal expectations. Studies have found that rural women face significant barriers to their participation in decision-making processes, including limited access to education and economic resources (Kumar, 2017).

1.2. Study Area:

The study was conducted in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam. Bihpuria Block is located in the north-eastern part of Lakhimpur District, Assam, India. It is situated approximately 30 km east of the district

headquarters, North Lakhimpur. Women constitute around 48% of the total population. It has a total population of 2,659 people. Out of them, 1,316 are the male population and 1,343 are the female population.

1.3. Significance of the study:

a) **Students:** The study will help students in understanding the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes and the challenges they face.

b) **Teachers:** The study can help the teachers in developing curricula and teaching materials that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

c) **Policymakers:** The finding of the study can inform policy decisions aimed at promoting women's participation in decision-making processes in addressing the challenges they face.

d) **Future researchers:** The study can help the future researchers in filling the gap in literature on women's participation in decision-making processes in rural Assam.

1.4. Objectives of the study:

The following are the main objectives of this present study:

1. To examine the level of women's participation in decision-making processes in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

2. To identify the factors that influence women's participation in decision-making processes in rural Assam.

3. To analyze the relationship between women's education and their participation in decision-making processes.

4. To examine the impact of economic empowerment on women's participation in decision-making processes.

1.5. Methodology:

Methodology is an important part of the research study. In the present study, the methodology has been presented under the following headings:

Research Design, population and sample, Tools for data collection, and Analysis of data. Each of these is discussed below:

1.5.1 Research Design

For the present study, the investigator employed the "Descriptive Method". The method has been used as the most widely used research method. It is the method of investigation that attempts to describe and interpret what exists at present in the form of conditions, practices, processes, trends, effects, attitudes, beliefs etc.

1.5.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study was all married women aged 18-60 years residing in

the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur district, Assam. In the present study, stratified random sampling technique was used to select sample.

The sample size for the study was 200 married women aged 18-60 years residing in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur District, Assam.

1.5.3 Tool for Data Collection

The structured questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection, consisting of 16 questions with multiple choices and opinionated questions. Questions were prepared based on the objectives.

1.6. Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Collected data were coded and analyzed through percentage and frequency distribution. Observations and work-experiences also helped the researcher to interpret the data. The investigator analyzed and interpreted the collected data in the following ways:

Table - 1 : Age Distribution

Sl. No.	Age Group	Freequency	Percentage
1	18-25	30	15%
2	26-35	60	30%
3	36-45	40	20%
4	46-55	50	25%
5	56-60	20	10%
Total		200	100%

The table reveals that the majority i.e., 30% belong to the age group between 26-35 years. Followed by the total percentage of women under the age group of 46-55 years is 25%, then 20% of 36-45 years, 15% of 18-25 years and 10% women from the age group between 56-60 years.

Table - 2 : Education Level Distribution

Sl. No.	Education Level	Frequency	%
1	Primary	80	40%
2	Secondary	70	35%
3	Higher Secondary	30	15%
4	Graduate and above	20	10%
Total		200	100%

This table reveals that 40% of the respondents perceived primary education. Most of the respondents 35% perceive secondary education. 15% of the respondents perceived higher secondary education and only 10% of women were degree holders.

Table-3 : Occupational Distribution

Sl. No.	Occupation	Frequency	%
1	Homemaker	70	35%
2	Farmer	40	20%
3	Laborer	30	15%
4	Businesswoman	10	5%
5	Others	50	25%
Total		200	100%

The above table shows the percentage of occupation where 35% women are homemakers, 40% women are farmers, 30% women are laborers, and 10% women are doing businesses. Other than these, 25% women do miscellaneous jobs to fulfill household expenses.

Table 4 : Decision-Making Regarding Household Expenses

Sl. No.	Who Makes Decisions	Frequency	%
1	Husband	80	40%
2	Wife	30	15%
3	Jointly	70	35%
4	Others	20	10%
Total		200	100%

From the table no. 4, it is found that only 15% women make decision regarding household expenses. Otherwise, according to 40% women, decisions were taken by their husband. And in 70% cases, both husband and wife together make decisions regarding household expenses. And in 20% cases, others senior family members take decisions.

Table 5 : Participation in Decision-Making Regarding Children's Education

Sl. No.	Frequency of Participation	Frequency	%
1	Always	20	10%
2	Often	50	25%
3	Sometimes	60	30%
4	Rarely	40	20%
5	Never	30	15%
Total		200	100%

Table 5 shows that only 10% women decision-making regarding their children's education. While 15% of women never get the chance to make decisions for their children's education.

Table 6 : Decision-Making Regarding Healthcare

Sl. No.	Who Makes Decision	Frequency	%
1	Husband	60	30%
2	Wife	40	20%
3	Jointly	70	35%
4	Others	30	15%
Total		200	100%

In Table 6, it can be found that, 40% husband makes decision regarding healthcare. And in 35% cases both husband and wife make decisions.

Table 7 : Participation in Community Meetings

Sl. No.	Participation	Frequency	%
1	Yes	70	35%
2	No	130	65%
Total		200	100%

The above table shows that only 35% of women participate in community meetings. And other 65% of the sample size are unable to participate in community meetings.

Table 8 : Frequency of Participation in decision-Making Regarding Community Development

Sl. No.	Frequency of Participation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Always	20	10%
2	Often	30	15%
3	Sometimes	40	20%
4	Rarely	50	25%
5	Never	60	30%
Total		200	100%

Table 8 shows that 30% of women never get the chance to make decisions while only 10% of women participate in decision-making regarding community development.

Table 9 : Representation in Community Meetings

Sl. No.	Who Represents	Frequency	%
1	Husband	100	50%
2	Wife	40	20%
3	Jointly	30	15%
4	Others	30	15%
Total		200	100%

From table 9, it can be found that in 50% cases, male members of the family take lead roles in community meetings. While 20% of female members represent community meetings.

Table 10 : Main Reason for Lack of Participation in Decision-Making

Sl. No.	Reason	Frequency	%
1	Lack of education	70	35%
2	Lack of economic empowerment	40	20%
3	Sociocultural barriers	50	25%
4	Others	40	20%
Total		200	100%

In table 10, it is found that 35% of women believe that lack of education can be a reason for less participation in decision-making. However, 20% of women believe that lack of economic empowerment also can be a reason of participation in decision-making.

Table 11 : Importance of Education

Sl. No.	Importance	Frequency	%
1	Very Important	120	60%
2	Somewhat important	50	25%
3	Not very important	20	10%
4	Not at all important	10	5%
Total		200	100%

From table 11, it can be found that about 60% of woman believes that there is a high need for education for them. While 10% women still thinks that education is not at all important for them

Table 12 : Role of Economic Empowerment

Sl. No.	Role	Frequency	%
1	Very important	100	50%
2	Somewhat important	60	30%
3	Not very important	20	10%
5	Not at all important	20	10%
Total		200	100%

Table 12 shows that 60% of women thinks that economic empowerment is necessary for them. Although 10% of women believes that they can easily survive without economic empowerment.

1.7. Findings:

The study reveals that women's participation in decision-making processes in the rural areas of Bihpuria Bock, Lakhimpur District, Assam is limited. The findings include that:

Socio-Demographic Factors:

In this study, it can be found that women's Participation in decision-making processes increases with age, with women aged 35-44 years showing the highest level of participation. Then it is also seen that, women with higher levels of education (secondary and above) are more likely to participate in decision-making. Women engaged in economic activities, such as agriculture and business, are more likely to participate in decision-making processes.

Factors Influencing Women's Participation:

The research showed that patriarchal norms and societal expectations limit women's participation in decision-making processes. It is also found that women's

economic dependence on their husbands or family members restricts their ability to participation in decision-making processes. It is seen that there is limited access to education and awareness about their rights and entitlements hinders women's participation in decision-making processes.

Decision-Making Processes:

This study showed that women are more likely to participate in household decision-making processes related to daily expenses and childcare. It is seen that women's participation in community decision-making processes is limited, with men dominating decision-making roles.

Impact of Women's Participation

Through this study, it can be found that women's participation in decision-making processes is associated with improved household well-being, including better health and education outcomes. Hence, women's participation in decision-making processes contributes to their empowerment, enabling them to take control of their lives and make informed decisions.

1.8. Conclusion and Suggestions:

Based on the study, we can conclude that women's participation in the rural areas of Bihpuria Block of Lakhimpur district, Assam is limited at both household and community levels and there are various factors affect women's participation such as education, economic empowerment, and sociocultural barriers. However, it was found that they are not very aware of the legislation or constitutional remedies for the development of women in all aspects.

From the above study, the following suggestions can be made to promote women's participation in decision-making processes in the rural areas:

1. Some measures should be taken to implement education and awareness programs to empower women with knowledge and skills.
2. Measures should be taken to promote economic empowerment programs such as vocational training, microfinance schemes and entrepreneurship development.
3. Measures should be taken to foster community engagement and participation in promoting women's empowerment through community-based initiatives.
4. Some measures should be taken to address sociocultural barriers by promoting gender-sensitive policies, and challenging patriarchal norms.
5. Measures should be taken to provide capacity-building training for women, focusing on leadership, communication, and decision-making skills.
6. Further studies should be arranged to explore the experiences and perspectives of women in rural areas.

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Government Policies and their Impact on Tribal Women's Education in Indian

Nija Pegu

ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution and effectiveness of government policies aimed at enhancing the educational prospects of tribal women in India. Adopting a qualitative content analysis approach, the research synthesizes insights from a wide range of secondary sources to critically analyse key policy initiatives, including targeted scholarships, reserved seats and special training programs. The primary objectives are twofold. First to identify and analyse the salient features of these policies and their intended strategies for addressing the educational disparities faced by tribal women, and second to evaluate the real-world impact of these policies on the educational status, access and outcomes for this marginalized group.

Findings reveal persistent gaps in policy implementation, limited outreach, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of culturally responsive education. The study underscores the need for more inclusive, context-sensitive and community-based approaches in policy formation and execution. By shedding light on both progress and limitations, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the systematic issues affecting tribal women's education and call for stronger, targeted intervention.

Key words: *Education, Government Policies, Tribal Women*

1.0 Introduction:

Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful tool for social transformation. Women's education plays a crucial role in the development of a nation, as educated women contribute to economic growth, social stability and overall well-being. Despite significant progress, many women worldwide still face barriers to accessing education due to gender inequality, cultural restrictions and socio-economic challenges. In the present era, women's education is more important than ever, as it is directly linked to gender equality, economic empowerment and sustainable development.

Education plays a transformative role in the lives of tribal women, empowering them socially, economically and politically. Despite the challenges they face, access to education enhances their quality of life and contributes to the overall development of tribal communities. The condition of tribal women in India is shaped by a combination of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. While they play a significant role in their communities, they face multiple challenges, including poverty, lack of education and limited healthcare access. Most tribal women are engaged in agriculture, forest-based activities or daily wage labour but they often receive low wages and have little job security. Education remains a significant challenge, as tribal women have lower literacy rates than their non-tribal counterparts due to geographical barriers, poverty and traditional beliefs. Early marriage and household responsibilities further hinder their access to education and while government initiatives like Eklavya Model Residential Schools aim to improve education levels, challenges remain in their implementation.

The literacy rates among tribal women in India have shown improvement over the years but continue to lack behind national averages and those of tribal men. According to the 2011 census the overall literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes (STs) was 59% compared to the national average of 73%. Specifically, female literacy rate in India increases from 55.1% to 68.4% from 2015-2016. This indicates a significant gender gap within tribal communities, as male literacy rates among STs were higher. Recent data from the periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20 indicates an improvement in overall ST literacy rates to 70.1%, specific figures for tribal women's literacy were not detailed. These statistics underscore the ongoing educational challenges faced by tribal women in India.

To address these challenges, the government has introduced various initiatives, including the Van Dhan Yojana, which supports forest-based livelihoods, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao for the education and protection of girl children and the Forest Rights Act (2006) which recognizes women's rights to forest land.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

1. To analyze the key government policies and schemes aimed at promoting education among tribal women in India.
2. To evaluate the impact of these policies on the education status, access and outcomes of tribal women, highlighting challenges and gaps in policy implementation.

1.2 Methodology of the study:

This study adopts a qualitative and quantitative content analysis approach based on secondary sources to analyse government policies and their impact on tribal women's education in India.

Discuss and analysis the key government policies and schemes aimed at promoting education among tribal women in India

Tribal women in India face multiple barriers to education, including geographical isolation, poverty, gender discrimination, early marriage and cultural constraints. Recognizing these challenges, the government of India has launched several policies and schemes to promote the education empowerment of tribal women. Following are some key government policies and schemes. Such schemes and policies have been discussed below:

1. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA): The main objective of SSA is to universalization of elementary education. Special provisions of this scheme are to establishment of schools in tribal habitations, free textbook, and uniforms for girls, bridge courses for dropout children in primary schools. SSA impact on improvement of access but did not fully address socio-cultural barriers faced by tribal girls. *MHRD (2000) SSA Framework for implementation*

2. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV): Kasturba Gandhi Balika launched in 2004. The primary aim of the scheme was to make education accessible to girls from disadvantage groups, particularly those belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled tribes (ST), and Other back classes (OBC) and minority communities and also residential schooling for girls from Class VI to VIII. This scheme helps to improved retention and literacy among tribal girls.

3. Post- Matric Scholarship for ST students: Post matric scholarship for ST students launched in 1944. It is a centrally sponsored scheme initiated by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. Its primary aimed to provide financial assistant to ST students pursuing post matriculation or post-secondary education, thereby enabling them to complete their studies without financial constraints.

4. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS): EMRSs were launched in 1997-98 and were later revamped in 2018-19 to provide quality education from class

VI to XII to tribal children. It offered a holistic learning environment, though many tribal regions still lack such facilities.

5. National Scheme of Incentive to girls for secondary education (NSGSE):

It launched in 2008 aimed to fixed deposit Rs 3,000 for ST/SC girls who enrolls in class IX and continuous till class X. It helps to reduced dropout rates among tribal girls.

6. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): The scheme was launched in 2015 to address gender-based discrimination and promote education of girl children. It impactful to raised awareness on girls' education, indirectly benefiting tribal women.

7. Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan: Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2018 merging SSA, RMSA and Teacher education. It focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education from preschool to class XII. It a holistic approach benefited tribal girls by addressing infrastructural and academic gaps.

8. Special central assistance to tribal sub-plan (SCA to TSP): It supplements the efforts of state Government for development and welfare of tribal people by extending special central assistance as an additive to the state tribal sub-plan (TSP). Focus on funds used for setting up hostels, schools and skill-training programs for tribal girls.

1.3.1 Education status and access of policy and schemes on tribal women's education

Most of the schemes such SSA, KGBV, Samagra Shiksha and EMRS have contributed significantly to improving educational access and enrolment among tribal girls, particularly at the primary and upper primary levels.

KGBV and EMRS addressed the residential and safety needs of tribal girls, especially in remote areas. SSA and Samagra Shiksha expanded infrastructure and focused on inclusive education, increasing the number of schools in tribal regions. NSIGSE and post-matric scholarships helped reduce financial barriers, leading to higher transitions from middle to secondary and higher education.

However, these gains have been uneven and limited beyond primary levels. Dropout rates remain high at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Early marriage, poverty migration and domestic responsibilities continue to limit tribal girls sustained participation in education.

While access has improved educational outcomes in terms of learning achievements, retention and completion rates remain low. Learning levels among tribal girls are often below national averages (ASER 2023). Few tribal women transition to higher education due to lack of guidance, language barriers and insufficient academic support.

Challenges in Policy implementation

Policy	Challenges
SSA & Samagra Shiksha	Inadequate teacher training, teacher absenteeism in tribal areas, poor students- teacher ratios, lack of tribal language inclusion
KGBV	Infrastructure gaps, shortage of female teachers and poor monitoring mechanisms
EMRS	Uneven distribution, gender-insensitive design, lack of counselling services
NSIGSE & Scholarships	Delayed payments, lack of awareness among eligible families, digital application barriers.
BBBP	More focused on advocacy than direct intervention, limited tribal community engagement.
SCA to TSP	Fragmented implementation, lack of data-based planning, state-wise disparities.

1.3.2 Gaps in Policy Design and Reach

- 1) Limited tribal-specific customization: Many schemes are generic and not tailored to the unique socio-cultural context of tribal women.
- 2) Lack of monitoring and evaluation: Few schemes have effective feedback mechanisms from tribal communities.
- 3) Digital divide: With a growing push for digital education, tribal girls in remote areas are left behind due to lack of internet, devices and electricity.

1.4 Recommendations:

1. Localized planning with tribal community participation for better relevance and ownership.
2. Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure timely delivery of benefits.
3. Recruit and train tribal women teachers to serve as role models and mentors.
4. Bridge the digital divide through ICT infrastructure and digital literacy.
5. Integrate life skills vocational training, and language-sensitive curricula to improve outcomes.
6. Provide hostel facilities, specially at secondary and higher secondary levels to reduce dropout.

1.5 Conclusion:

The analysed policies and schemes have undoubtedly contributed expanding access and reducing gender disparities in tribal women's education. However, to realize sustainable and equitable outcomes a more targeted, culturally responsive and implementation effective approach is essential. Bridging the access-outcome gap remains the key challenge moving forward.

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Achieving Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India

Lucky Dowarah

ABSTRACT

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is essential for promoting sustainable development and human rights in India. Despite notable advancements, women and girls in India continue to confront significant social, economic, and cultural obstacles. This study undertakes a comprehensive review of existing literature on gender equality and women's empowerment in India, synthesizing findings from various studies and reports. The study employs a qualitative and analytical method, utilizing a systematic review methodology to analyze and synthesize existing literature on the topic. The study involves a comprehensive review of existing studies and reports, including academic articles, government reports, and policy documents. The study identifies several challenges, including lack of awareness and education, limited access to resources and opportunities, social and cultural barriers, inadequate laws and policies, violence against women and girls, societal norms and patriarchal values, and limited representation in decision-making positions. The study reveals several strategies

for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, including promoting education and economic empowerment, addressing violence, and fostering social and cultural change. The study highlights the need for sustained efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality and promotes a comprehensive approach to addressing the various dimensions of women's empowerment. The findings of the study have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders working to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India. By developing policies and initiatives that address these challenges, India can promote sustainable development and human rights for all its citizens.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, India, Government Policies, Sustainable Development, Human Rights.*

1.0 Introduction:

Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental human rights and essential components of sustainable development. Despite significant progress, women and girls in India continue to face substantial social, economic, and cultural barriers that hinder their empowerment and equality. The importance of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been widely recognized, and numerous studies have highlighted the significance of addressing the various dimensions of women's empowerment, including education, health, economic independence, and social participation. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current status of gender equality and women's empowerment in India, identify key challenges hindering their progress, and analyze government policies aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The study reveals that women and girls in India face significant challenges, including limited access to education, lack of access to resources and opportunities, social and cultural barriers, inadequate laws and policies, violence against women and girls, societal norms and patriarchal values, and limited representation in decision-making positions. To address these challenges, the study highlights several strategies, including promoting education and economic empowerment, addressing violence, and fostering social and cultural change. The study also examines the role of government policies and initiatives in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India, including Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. The findings of the study have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders working to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India. By highlighting the challenges and strategies for

promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, this study aims to promote a more inclusive and equitable society in India.

1.1 Review of related literature:

Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in India. Some of the notable studies are as follows -

Amartya (1999) conducted a study on "Development as Freedom" and the result of this study showed that women's empowerment is essential for achieving sustainable development and human rights.

Ganguly-Scrase (2003) conducted a study on "The Paradox of Globalization: Women's Empowerment and the Politics of Identity in India" and found that societal norms and patriarchal values perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence.

World Bank (2011) published a report on "World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development" and found that gender equality is crucial for promoting economic growth and human development.

Asadullah and Chaudhury (2012) conducted a study on "The Impact of Education on Women's Empowerment in India" and the result of this showed that education has a positive impact on women's empowerment

Dreze and Sen (2013) conducted a study on "An Uncertain Glory: India and It's Contradictions" and found that women's empowerment has a positive impact on health and education outcomes in India.

United Nations Development Programme (2015) published a report on "Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development" and found that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for achieving sustainable development and human rights.

Kumar (2016) conducted a study on "Gender, Caste, and Class: Intersectionality and Women's Empowerment in India" and found that gender inequality in India is shaped by factors such as caste, class, and religion.

Smith et al. (2017) conducted a study on "The Impact of Women's Empowerment on Child Health and Education Outcomes in India" and found that women's empowerment improves child health and education outcomes.

National Family Health Survey (2019-2021) published a report on "National Family Health Survey-5" and found that women and girls in India face challenges such as restricted access to education and healthcare, economic inequality, and violence.

1.2 Objective of the study:

The following are the main objectives of the present study:

1. To examine the current status of gender equality and women's empowerment in India.

2. To identify key challenges hindering gender equality women's empowerment in India.

3. To analyze Government Policies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India.

1.3 Methodology:

The present study is based on the qualitative and analytical method on the basis of secondary sources which contains the journals, newspapers, reprint of publish papers, soft copies included web pages, pdf files downloaded from the websites. The study synthesized findings from various studies and reports to identify key challenges and strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India.

1.4 Key challenges hindering Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India:

The pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment in India is an ongoing endeavor, hindered by a complex array of challenges that impede progress and perpetuate disparities. Despite concerted efforts to address these issues, numerous obstacles remain, thwarting the realization of women's rights and empowerment. The major challenges of gender equality and women empowerment are discussed in below -

i. Lack of Awareness and Education:

The lack of education is a significant challenge hindering gender equality and women's empowerment, as it perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage and limits opportunities for personal and professional growth. Without access to quality education, women are more likely to suffer from poverty, economic dependence, and vulnerability to exploitation and violence. The dearth of education also reinforces gender-based stereotypes and biases, restrictions in women's participation in decision-making processes, and limits their influence in leadership positions. Furthermore, limited education hinders women's awareness of their rights and entitlements, rendering them powerless to claim their rightful place in society. Ultimately the lack of education perpetuates patriarchal norms and values, entrenching gender disparities and hindering the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment.

ii. Lack of Access to Resources and Opportunities:

The lack of access to resources and opportunities can also a challenge of hindering gender equality and women's empowerment. Limited access to essential resources such as land ownership, credit, and technology, restricts their economic autonomy and perpetuates dependence on others. Furthermore, limited access to opportunities,

including education, employment, and training, hinders women's ability to acquire skills, secure decent work, and achieve economic stability. This scarcity of resources and opportunities exacerbates existing power imbalances, reinforcing patriarchal norms and limiting women's participation in decision-making processes, ultimately perpetuating gender-based disparities and hindering the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment.

iii. Social and Cultural barriers:

Social and cultural barriers pose a significant challenge to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Deeply ingrained societal norms, traditions, and cultural practices perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, limiting women's autonomy, agency, and opportunities. Harmful customs, such as child marriage, dowry, and female feticide, reinforce patriarchal values, perpetuating gender-based violence and inequality. These barriers also restrict women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, further entrenching existing power imbalances and hindering their ability to participate fully in society. Ultimately, social and cultural barriers impede the advancement of women's rights and empowerment, perpetuating systemic inequalities and hindering the attainment of gender equality.

iv. Inadequate Laws and Policies:

Inadequate laws and policies pose a significant challenge to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Weak or ineffective legislation, coupled with inadequate enforcement and implementation, fails to provide sufficient protection and support for women's rights. Gaps in laws and policies perpetuate discriminatory practices, allowing gender-based violence, harassment, and exploitation to persist. Furthermore, inadequate laws and policies often neglect the specific needs and experiences of women, particularly those from marginalized communities, exacerbating existing inequalities. The lack of effective laws and policies hinders women's access to justice, restricts their participation in decision-making processes, and limits their opportunities for economic and social advancement, ultimately perpetuating systemic inequalities and hindering the attainment of gender equality.

v. Violence against Women and Girls:

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive and insidious challenge that severely hinders gender equality and women's empowerment. The physical, emotional, and psychological toll of violence restricts women's autonomy, agency, and opportunities, perpetuating a culture of fear, silence, and subjugation. Gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harassment, not only inflicts

harm on individuals but also reinforces patriarchal norms and power imbalances, limiting women's participation in public life, education, and economic activities. Furthermore, violence against women and girls perpetuates intergenerational cycles of abuse, trauma, and inequality, making it a critical obstacle to achieving gender equality and empowering women to reach their full potential.

vi. Societal Norms and Patriarchal Values:

Social norms and patriarchal values significantly hinder gender equality and women's empowerment. Deeply ingrained societal expectations and stereotypes perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, limiting women's roles, opportunities, and autonomy. These norms dictate women's subordination to men, reinforcing power imbalances and perpetuating gender-based violence, harassment, and exploitation. They also restrict women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, further entrenching existing inequalities. Moreover, social norms and patriarchal values often normalize and justify discriminatory practices, making it difficult for women to challenge and overcome these barriers, ultimately hindering their ability to participate fully in society and achieve their full potential.

vii. Limited representation in decision-making positions (dominated from leadership):

The limited representation of women in decision-making positions significantly hinders gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, governance, and policy-making bodies results in their voices, perspectives, and experiences being marginalized or excluded from critical decision-making processes. This lack of representation perpetuates a power imbalance, allowing men's interests and priorities to dominate, while women's needs and concerns are neglected or overlooked. Consequently, policies and programs may fail to address the specific challenges and barriers faced by women, reinforcing existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for women's advancement, ultimately hindering the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. Moreover, intersectional nature of gender inequality, limited justice, human trafficking and modern-day slavery, economic inequality are also the challenges of hindering gender equality and women empowerment in India.

1.5 Government Policies for promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India:

Indian Government has adopted some remarkable policies for promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India, some of them are discussed in below –

- **BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO (BBBP) :**

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao policy has been instrumental in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India which was Launched in 2015 and this flagship initiative focuses on protects and promotes the girl child's rights, addressing declining child sex ratios, ensures girls' education and prevents gender-biased sex-selective elimination and empowers girls and women through education and social support .

- **PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA (PMUY):**

This scheme launched in 2016, intent to provide free LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households. By substituting the conventional food preparation ways of burning wood, etc with cleaner LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas), the program aims to better the health and safety of women in households.

- **MAHILA SHAKTI KENDRA (MSK):**

MSK launched under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), seeks to empower rural women by providing support for skill development, awareness campaigns, and access to government schemes. It operates at the national, state, district, and block levels.

- **PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY):**

PMMVY Launched in 2017, PMMVY is a maternity benefit plan that furnish financial aid to expectant and lactating women. It aims is to assure that women receive satisfactory nutrition and care during pregnancy and childbirth.

- **NATIONAL MISSION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (NMEW):**

NMEW was launched to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round development of women. It focuses on bridging gender gaps, empowering women economically, and enhancing their political and social participation.

- **SUKANYA SAMRIDDHI YOJANA (SSY):**

This is a savings scheme, launched under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative, encourages parents to save for the education and future expenses of their girl child. It provides a higher interest rate and tax benefits.

- **RASTRIYA MAHILA KOSH (RMK):**

RMK is a general credit fund for women that provides microfinance services to women in the in-formal sector. It supports women's entrepreneurship and economic activities, promoting financial inclusion.

- **NATINAL RURAL EMPOWERMENT GURANTEE ACT (NREGA):**

While not entirely for women, NREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment to every rural household. It has a significant impact on empowering women in rural

areas by providing them with economic opportunities. These policies collectively aim to address various dimensions of women's empowerment, recognizing the importance of education, health, economic independence, and social participation in fostering gender equality in India.

- **WOMEN HELPLINE (181):**

The Women Helpline is a 24x7 emergency helpline for women in distress. It provides support, counseling, and assistance to women facing violence or harassment. This initiative aims to assure the safety and well-being of women across the country.

So we can say that all these policies has a comprehensive target to address various dimensions of women's empowerment, recognizing the importance of education, health, economic independence, and social participation in fostering gender equality in India.

1.6 Findings and Discussion:

The findings of this study underscore the complexities and challenges associated with achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in India. Despite the implementation of various policies and initiatives aimed at promoting women's rights and empowerment, the study reveals that women and girls in India continue to face significant social, economic, and cultural barriers.

The study identifies seven key challenges that hinder gender equality and women's empowerment in India, including limited access to education, lack of access to resources and opportunities, social and cultural barriers, inadequate laws and policies, violence against women and girls, societal norms and patriarchal values, and limited representation in decision-making positions. These challenges are deeply ingrained in Indian society and perpetuate a cycle of poverty, marginalization, and exclusion. Therefore to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India, several key steps can be taken such as strengthening education and awareness programs, particularly in rural areas, can help address the lack of education and awareness among women. Enhancing access to resources and opportunities, such as land ownership, credit, and technology, can also support women's entrepreneurship and economic activities. Additionally, addressing social and cultural barriers through targeted campaigns can help challenge and change discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Strengthening laws and policies can provide better protection and support for women's rights, while preventing violence against women and girls and promoting women's representation in decision-making positions can also drive progress. Furthermore, addressing the intersectional nature of gender inequality, enhancing access to justice, preventing human trafficking and modern-day slavery, and promoting economic empowerment can all contribute to a more equitable society. By implementing these

initiatives, India can make significant strides towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, ultimately promoting sustainable development and human rights.

The findings of the study highlight the importance of addressing the intersectional nature of gender inequality, which is shaped by factors such as caste, class, and religion. This intersectionality exacerbates the challenges faced by women and girls in India, making it essential to develop policies and initiatives that address these multiple dimensions of inequality.

The study also examines the role of government policies and initiatives in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India. The findings suggest that policies such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana demonstrate a comprehensive approach to addressing various dimensions of women's empowerment, including education, health, economic independence, and social participation. However, the study's findings also suggest that these policies and initiatives may not be sufficient to address the scale and complexity of the challenges faced by women and girls in India.

From this study it is proved that findings have significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders working to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India. The study highlights the need for sustained efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality, including social and cultural barriers, inadequate laws and policies, and limited representation in decision-making positions. The study also underscores the importance of promoting education and economic empowerment, addressing violence against women and girls, and fostering social and cultural change.

1.7 Conclusion:

In conclusion, this comprehensive study on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in India highlights the complexities and challenges associated with promoting women's rights and empowerment. The findings underscore the need for sustained efforts to address the root causes of gender inequality, including social and cultural barriers, inadequate laws and policies, and limited representation in decision-making positions. By developing policies and initiatives that address these challenges, India can promote sustainable development and human rights for all its citizens.

From this study, we and society can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, leading to improved education, health, economic independence, and social participation for

women and girls. This, in turn, can foster social change, promote sustainable development, and ultimately benefit individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole.

The results of this study can also inform strategies to promote women's representation in decision-making positions, ultimately contributing to a more equitable society. By addressing the intersectional nature of gender inequality, enhancing access to justice, preventing human trafficking and modern-day slavery, and promoting economic empowerment, we can create a more just and equitable society where women and girls can thrive.

Furthermore, this study's findings can contribute to a broader understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in India, ultimately informing the development of effective policies and interventions. By promoting education and economic empowerment, addressing violence, and fostering social and cultural change, we can create a more equitable society where women and girls have equal opportunities to participate and contribute.

Ultimately, the results of this study can inform strategies to promote women's empowerment and gender equality, leading to a more just and equitable society where women and girls can thrive. By working together to address the challenges and barriers that hinder women's progress, we can create a brighter future for all individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations are made to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in India. These include developing policies and interventions that promote education and economic empowerment for women and girls, address violence against women and girls, foster social and cultural change, promote women's representation in decision-making positions, address the intersectional nature of gender inequality, enhance access to justice, prevent human trafficking and modern-day slavery, and promote economic empowerment. By implementing these recommendations, India can promote sustainable development and human rights for all its citizens, ultimately creating a more just and equitable society where women and girls can thrive.

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Gender Discrimination – Status of Women in Medieval Indian Society

Jitamoni Devi

ABSTRACT

Gender is a human-made concept from a social and cultural perspective. Gender deals with the studies of the functions, responsibilities and roles of the masculine and female genders in society. It is a social issue and the social gender discrimination is the basis of all exploitation, oppression and violence against women. Gender discrimination is a significant issue in Indian society, affecting various aspects of life, including education, employment, political representation and social rights. Deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions, discrimination against women and marginalized gender identities impacts their opportunities and quality of life. To understand this issue, it is essential to study the history of the development of gender discrimination in India. The development of the political and social and cultural history of India is mainly divided into three periods – the ancient age, the Middle Ages and the modern age. In the Indian society gender discrimination was not present in the early Vedic period but from the later Vedic period gender discrimination was evolved, which led to the decline of women status in the Indian society over the ages. This article

explores the discrimination faced by the women in medieval India on the basis of gender, highlighting social norms legal restrictions and cultural practices that contributed to their subjugation.

Keywords: - *Gender, discrimination, inequality, women status, medieval India, social, political, decline.*

1.1 Introduction:

The period from the Turkish invasion of India to the beginning of British rule is generally known as the Middle Ages or medieval period of Indian history. Gender inequality in medieval Indian society was a deeply entrenched issue. Women were primarily confined to domestic roles, with limited access to education, political power and economic independence. Since medieval Indian society was patriarchal, patriarchal norms dictated and controlled women's lives, often restricting their mobility and decision-making rights. Socially prevalent oppressive practices such as child marriage, 'Purdah' (veiling system) and sati system further reinforced gender inequality. Despite these barriers some women in medieval India break societal restrictions and contributed to literature, politics and warfare. Studying gender inequality in medieval India helps us to understand the struggles faced by Indian women and assess the gradual changes that led to their empowerment over time.

1.2 Methodology:

This study employs a historical-analytical research methodology to investigate gender discrimination in medieval India. By analyzing historical records, legal documents, literature and scholarly works, the aims to trace the development of gender-based inequalities and the societal structures that have upheld them. The aim is to explore how gender roles and inequalities were constructed, maintained and challenged within the social, religious and political frameworks of the time, particularly between 11th to 18th centuries CE.

1.3 Analysis:

Before discussing gender inequality in medieval India extensively, it is essential to study the status of women in ancient India.

1.3.1 Status of women in early and later Vedic period: In ancient India specially in the early Vedic period women enjoyed high status in society. Women were getting great respect in the society. Women enjoyed equal status with men in both intellectual and spiritual life. The Rigveda Apola, Gargi . They had attained to the rank of Rishis

and composed hymns. Women were also skilled in martial art. Rigveda mentions about numerous women who participated in the wars with men. Queen of king Namushi, queen of khel king Rani Bispala, Ashwinikumara, Mudgalani they had fought against the enemy in battlefield. Women had right in the matters of marriage. Girls were getting married at a mature age. The normal age of marriage was seventeen to eighteen years. There was no dowry system in this period. Panini mentions the role of women as a teacher in Vedic period. Apishali and Audamedhi were the women teachers mentioned by Panini in Mahabhashya.

From the later Vedic period, the status of women started to gradually decline. The social status of celibate women who once composed Vedic mantras began to erode in the later Vedic society. A belief developed in the later Vedic society that the birth of a daughter brings sorrow to the family and birth of a son brings blessings and it saves the family. In the Atharva Veda women are described as 'dirty'. It described that a woman is always dirty from below their navel. The Maitreya Samhita says playing dice, drinking wine and association of women are the same. Women lost their economic independence and their rights and freedom were reduced due to the establishment of male domination in warfare and agricultural production. Women's right to participate in assemblies was violated or in many cases they were denied formal education. The book 'Manuscript' also known as 'Laws of Manu' was highly influential in shaping Indian society. It played significant role in the decline of women's status over time. It emphasizes male dominance and control over women. Several social practices that unfavorable to women emerged in this period which contributed to the declination of women status. Such as- 'Decline of women's education', 'women's restriction on property rights', 'Early marriage', 'sati system' (Not widespread during this period but there are early references to it), 'Widow restrictions' etc. From the later Vedic period Indian women have gradually been neglected and left behind men.

1.3.2 Gender discrimination faced by the women of medieval Indian society:

The medieval period of Indian History began from the Turkish invasion which led the establishment of Muslim (Turkish, Afghan, Mughal) rule in India, lasted for about six hundred years. The arrival of Muslims and the penetration of Islamic civilization gave a new dimension to the traditional Indian society. Changes were seen in the customs and rituals of the society. During the medieval period of Indian history, the status of women deteriorated significantly compared to the ancient period. Gender inequality becomes evident in society, especially in the context of women's right and duties. They emphasis on the purity of women but never questioned the morality of men. Muslim women had to wear 'burkha'.

1.3.3 Women in Sultanate period: During the Sultanate period, a few Muslim women were able to attain a significant position in contemporary times. Razia Sultana, the daughter of Iltutmish, holds a unique place in history as the first and only woman to ascend the throne of Delhi. Other women who gained recognition as administrators include the Chandela princess Rani Durgavati, Chand Bibi ect. Chand Sultana was known for her education and leadership skills during the Sultanate period. Meanwhile, Babur's daughter, Gulbadan Begum, demonstrated exceptional literary talent. Her work, Humayun Nama, offers valuable insights into the reign of Humayun. Jahanara was another remarkable female writer of the time, contributed significantly to literature. Additionally, poets such as Mirabai, Dewal Rani, and Aurangzeb's daughter 'Zeb-un-Nissa' left a lasting impact on medieval Indian poetry. Historical sources suggest that during the reign of Ghiyasuddin Khilji, a vocational training center was established in Saranchpur, where women received instruction in dance, music, embroidery, military skills, and handicrafts.

1.3.4 Women in Mughal period: In the Mughal period, women had access to household education. A special blessing, 'Zafar Chani', was written four months and four days after a daughter's birth. In Akbar's early years, when he was still a minor, his mother, 'Hamida Banu' and his wet nurse, 'Maham Anga' played significant roles in governance. Later, 'Nur Jahan' the wife of Jahangir, became a powerful political figure, effectively influencing the administration. Other notable Mughal women included Akbar's Rajput wife 'Jodhabai' Shah Jahan's wife 'Mumtaz', their daughter 'Jahanara', and Princess 'Zeb-un-Nissa'. The second Bahadur Shah's wife, 'Jinat Mahal' was another woman of remarkable intelligence and influence. Women from other regions of India also held power. In Kashmir and South India, Hindu women took on governing roles. Queen 'Rudrama' of the Kakatiya kingdom successfully ruled for nearly four decades.

1.4 Discussion:

The study highlights the prominent role women played in medieval Indian society during the Sultanate and Mughal periods. However, it is also evident that gender bias persisted, as seen in the case of Razia Sultana, who ultimately lost her throne due to being a woman. In medieval India, the practices of 'purdah' (the veil system) and child marriage posed significant barriers to women's education. Women and girls were largely restricted from accessing education outside their homes. The social structure of medieval India was characterized by various regressive customs, many of which were directly linked to women's status and rights. One of the most prevalent customs in both Hindu and Muslim societies was child marriage. The prevailing political and

social conditions, particularly among Hindus, compelled fathers to marry off their daughters at a very young age. The abduction of Hindu girls was a common occurrence, often followed by forced conversion to Islam and marriage. In response to the threat of religious conversion, many Hindu women practiced 'Jauhar', a ritual self-immolation to preserve their honor. Another deeply ingrained social practice was polygamy, which significantly undermined the status of women. This practice led to domestic conflicts and contributed to moral decline within society. Despite Emperor Akbar's attempts to regulate polygamy, his efforts were largely unsuccessful. Among Hindus, inter-caste marriage was practiced, whereas in Muslim communities, young boys were often married to older women for financial and social advantages. The dowry system was another widespread and detrimental practice. Emperor Akbar was one of the few rulers who openly opposed this custom. During the Sultanate period, the practice of Sati (self-immolation of widows) was observed, particularly among wealthy and Rajput families, although it was not mandatory. The institution of courtesan ship persisted from ancient times into the medieval period, although courtesans were subjected to social stigma and ostracization during this era. These women were often met with contempt and exclusion from mainstream society. The Devadasi system, in which young girls were dedicated to temple service, remained widespread in major Hindu temples. In Hindu society, women were denied inheritance rights over their husband's property, whereas Muslim women were entitled to a share of their father's property under Islamic law.

The implementation of Islamic legal principles resulted in greater confinement of Muslim women within their homes. They were often secluded in 'Zenana' (women's quarters) and required to wear a veil (Purdah) when venturing outside. Consequently, women became entirely dependent on male family members for all external affairs. This practice was particularly rigid among elite Muslim women, who were often confined within harems, further restricting their movement. Among Hindus, the 'Purdah' system was adopted primarily as a protective measure to safeguard women's honor and maintain societal norms regarding female chastity. Over time, this practice was increasingly internalized and institutionalized among the upper-caste Hindu families, who viewed it as a symbol of dignity and social prestige. Consequently, the seclusion of women became an entrenched norm in both elite Hindu and Muslim households. Nevertheless, there were regional variations in these practices. In certain Muslim communities of South India, the purdah system was notably absent. In the Vijayanagara Empire, Purdah was primarily practiced by women of aristocratic households, whereas Hindu middle-class and lower-class women were not subjected to such restrictions. These women actively participated in both domestic and economic activities alongside their husbands.

In Rajput society, women were subjected to multiple societal constraints. A high value was placed on chastity, and many Rajput women preferred self-immolation (Jauhar) over surrendering to enemy forces. The case of Queen Padmini is particularly notable in this regard. The practices of Sati, child marriage, and polygamy were also widespread in Rajput communities. The birth of female children was generally discouraged. Similarly, in the Vijayanagara Empire, several harmful social customs were prevalent, including child marriage, polygamy, dowry, and Sati. The Sati system was particularly revered, with widows who performed Sati being honored within the society.

1.5 Conclusion:

During the medieval India, women experienced widespread gender-based discrimination due to the dominance of patriarchal norms. Their social standing deteriorated significantly compared to earlier eras, as they were denied equal access to education, political roles and property rights. Custom such as child marriage, dowry, Purdah and sati became more prevalent, further restricting their freedom and dignity. Although a few women rose to prominence and challenged social expectations, these cases were rare and did not reflect the general condition of women during this time. Overall, the period entrenched inequality and set back the progress of women's rights in Indian society. Understanding this historical context is essential in recognizing the roots of gender inequality in India and emphasizes the need for continued efforts towards equality and empowerment of women in all spheres of life.

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Socio-Economic Status among Rural Women of Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam

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Darshana Phukan

ABSTRACT

Socio-Economic Status (SES) plays the role as a key determinant to reflect the progress of a society. The socio-economic status of the men is not only confined to this progress but also the socio-economic status of women is a significant part of it. The present study focuses to explore the socio-economic status among women in rural area of Nalkata village located along the North Lakhimpur Bypass Road, Lakhimpur, Assam. The study investigates the socio-economic status of women with the help of Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS-SSK) developed by Rajib Singh, Radhey Shyam and Satish Kumar used to collect data to gain an understanding about the socio-economic status of peoples within a society. The study highlights the various aspects such as Education level, Occupation, Income Awareness, Type of houses, Types of family, social participation etc. The study has found a positive direction in women's education and socio-economic status, but there remains a significant dissimilarity. With providing significant suggestions the findings and analysis of the study are discussed in details in this paper.

Keywords: *Rural Women, Socio-Economic Status (SES), Women Empowerment.*

1.0 Introduction:

Women shape the backbone of a family, home & society. Their contributions are not only confined to family but also extend to the development of a society and Nation. Education plays a significant role to ensure this progress of the society. While focusing in India, the current population is estimated by United Nations Data is 1,460,775,410 i.e. 1.46 billion which is equivalent to 17.78% of the total world population. That's includes 51.6% males & 48.4% females with 82.14% and 65.46% of literacy rate respectively, that's leads to the 74.04% overall literacy rate of India. As women take 48.4% of the overall population of India, thus their educational (65.46% literacy) and socio-economic status greatly influence their lifestyle and society. Specially in rural areas of India women often face multiple challenges that hinder their overall progress. In Assam, a state of Northeastern India 72.19% of literacy rate was found in which male literacy rate of 77.85% and female literacy rate of 66.27% (Census 2011).

Educational status and literacy rate reflects the current position & progressive direction of the Socio-economic status of any society. Socio-Economic Status (SES) indicates about a person's or group's social and economic position which can be measured by factors like income, education, health and occupation etc. American Psychological Association advocates about this concept as it not only focuses on income but also educational achievement, occupational prestige, and the subjective perceptions of social status and social class. Socio-Economic Status can be called as mirror as it reflects the attitudes, quality of lifestyle and the opportunities afford by the individuals of a society. In this present world, unfolding pages of past few decades indicates that women have developed their status in all areas like education, health and specially in their socio-economic status. Socio-Economic Status plays a significant role as a development indicator not only in respect to men but also as a part of women. Now a days, with the development of science and technology along with the schemes of the governments, women's progress seems to be rapid in our society. There are various factors that determines the Socio-economic status of the women in the society, such as income, education, occupation, wealth, lifestyle, health access, geographical location, political and legal factors.

In the study of Chowdhury, A et al. (2021) i.e. "Empowerment of Tribal Women with Respect to their Socio-Economic Status in India" found that as a result of women empowerment, women from tribal communities are able to break the traditional prejudices and norms that creates hinder to their socio-economic development.

Khalid Muhammad Waqas, et. al (2019) conducted a study i.e. "Socio-Economic Factors and Women's Empowerment: Evidence from Punjab, Pakistan", this study revealed that women in urban regions are more socio-economically empowered than the rural women's.

Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam: According to Census 2011 information the location code or village code of Nalkata village is 288094. Nalkata village is located in North Lakhimpur subdivision of Lakhimpur district in Assam, India. It is situated 3.5km away from North Lakhimpur, which is both district & sub-district headquarter of Nalkata village. As per 2009 stats, Bogolijan is the gram panchayat of Nalkata village.

The total geographical area of village is 170.14 hectares. Nalkata has a total population of 1,022 peoples, out of which male population is 521 while female population is 501. This results in a sex ratio of approximately 961 females for every 1,000 males. Literacy rate of nalkata village is 83.86% out of which 86.18% males and 81.44% females are literate. There are about 216 houses in Nalkata village.

North Lakhimpur is nearest to Nalkata village for all major economic activities, which is approximately 3.5km away. Population of Nalkata

1.1 Review of Related Literature:

Bhoganadam, D.S etal. (2014) focus on a study with entitled “Women’s Empowerment and Economic Development” with a aim to explore about the multidimensional role of women empowerment in driving economic development. The study identifies a bidirectional relationship: development facilitates women empowerment, and empowered women significantly contribute to development processes. It throws light on gender inequalities in education, labour market participation and the need for transformative policies to address these issues. The paper underscores that empowering women through education is crucial, as it is like a gateway to opportunities and socio-economic advancement and gave stress on various addressing interventions that can enhance the role of women in economic development.

R. L. Vinodhini & P. Vaijyanthi (2016) conducted a study on “Self-Help Group and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural India”. The purpose of the study was to know the status of SHG in rural India and its impact on socio-economic development of women. From the study it was observed that the key reasons for the success of SHGs are its link with the poor people, its innovative practices, its capacity to enable people’s participation in development and trust building at different levels between stake-holders. SHGs also help in the financial status of the households. They have developed self-confidence and independence among rural women, which can turn increased the livelihood of rural people.

Mandal, B (2018) a lecturer from West Bengal conducted a qualitative study on women with entitled “A Study on Women Empowrment In 21st Century” with a purpose to know about the education of women prevailing in pre - colonial, colonial and modern India. The investigation underscores the pivotal role of education as an

important tool to achieve empowerment. While highlighting that educated women are more able to achieve socio-economic and political independence. The study also emphasizes the importance of addressing persistent gender disparities through targeted government programs and interventions such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao along with the other schemes aimed at social and economic inclusion. The findings of the research indicate about the status of India that India has continuously tries to improve the status of women through education, constitutional rights and government schemes, but there remains a significant challenge in achieving full empowerment due to cultural and systemic barriers.

Khalid Muhammad Waqas, et. al (2019) conducted a study entitled “Socio-Economic Factors and Women’s Empowerment: Evidence from Punjab, Pakistan”. The purpose of the study was to extent of women’s empowerment in Punjab, Pakistan and its divisions, along with rural and urban regions. In addition, the study also checks the effect of the gender wage differentiations. The results of the study show that 34.91% of women are empowered in Punjab overall, with independence being the highest dimensional contributor, and ownership of assets being the least. Women are 31.43% more empowered in urban regions. The results indicate that Islamabad has significantly more women’s empowerment, while Dera Ghazi Khan has the lowest percentage of empowered women.

Chowdhury, A et al. (2021) conducted an inquiry with entitled “Empowerment of Tribal Women with Respect to their Socio-Economic Status in India” with a purpose to find the role of education in uplifting the socio - economic conditions of tribal communities in India. In this study primary focus is given on the tribal women of India. This study highlighted historical barriers to tribal education along with cultural and religious factors that led to resistance against modern education systems introduced significant socio-economic changes among tribal populations such as increased literacy rates, delayed marriages etc. The study found the transformative power of modern education in breaking down the traditional prejudice and norms that create obstacles in the socio-economic progress of tribal women. In spite of the various advancements’ persistent challenges such as poverty and culture conservatism can continue to limit the reach and effectiveness of educational initiatives in tribal regions.

1.2 Significance of the study:

The present study grasps significant relevance in understanding the educational status, financial awareness, and socio-economic status of rural women in Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam. By inspecting these aspects, the research aims to clarify the existing obstacles faced by women in rural settings. The understanding derived from this study can serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, development

agencies and non-governmental organizations in formulating targeted interventions aimed at improving educational opportunities, promoting financial literacy and enhancing the overall socio-economic conditions of rural women. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discourse on rural development and gender empowerment in the context of northeastern India.

1.3 Objectives of the study:

The following are the main objectives of the study,

- To study the educational status among rural women of Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam.
- To study the awareness on financial accounts and policies among rural women of Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam.
- To study the socio-economic status among rural women of Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam.

1.4 Research Questions:

- What is the educational status of rural women in Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam?
- How aware are rural women in Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam about monthly saving and other financial schemes?
- What is the socio-economic status of rural women in Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam?

1.5 Operational Definitions:

- **Rural women:** In the present study, rural women refer to female individuals residing in Nalkata Village, Lakhimpur District, Assam
- **Socio-economic status:** In this present study socio economic status refers the social and economic position of rural women as determined by factors such as educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, type of housing, access to basic facilities (like electricity, water, and sanitation), and ownership of assets.

1.6 Delimitations of the study:

1. The study is limited to Nalkata village of North Lakhimpur in Lakhimpur District.
2. The study is limited only on rural women.
3. The study is limited to surveying the socio-economic status of rural women.

1.7 Methodology:

Methodology is the heart of a study or a research investigation. The methodology for the present study is classified in the following sub headings.

1.7.1 Research Methods

The present study has adopted a descriptive research method and mainly based on primary data which are collected through Survey method.

1.7.2 Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of 100 households of Nalkata village located along the North Lakhimpur Bypass Road, Lakhimpur, Assam. comprising women from various socio-economic status.

For the present study 50 samples have selected from the population through the simple random sampling.

1.7.3 Tool for Data Collection

Keeping the light on the main objectives of this study, the presents study used the following tool for data collection -

Socio-Economic Status Scale (SESS-SSK), developed by Rajib Singh, Radhey Shyam and Satish Kumar used to collect data to gain an understanding about the socio-economic status of peoples. The scale mainly focuses on areas like Education level, Occupation, Income Awareness, Type of house, Types of family, social participation, Land ownership etc.

The scale assigns scores to responses various dimensions. The classification involves regarding the socio-economic status of the people are -Low Socio-Economic Status, Lower Socio-Economic Status, Middle/Average Socio-Economic Status, Upper Socio-Economic Status, High Socio-Economic Status.

1.7.4 Procedure of Data Collection

Socio-Economic Status Scale was administered to the selected sample during the data collection. Firstly, samples were given a short information on how to response the various items of the study, then while maintaining a positive rapport data were collected from each sample drawn from the population.

1.7.5 Statistical techniques used

For the present study, descriptive statistics is used to interpret the data. Graphical representations like Bar diagram, Pie Chart, Percentage Frequency distribution is used.

1.8 Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Descriptive statistics are used to interpret the following data

Table No 1: Classification of Educational Status of Rural Women

Educational Status	No of Women	Percentage (%)
Post Graduate	10	20%
Graduation/Diploma Course	11	22%
12 th Pass	17	34%
10 th Pass	8	16%
8 th Pass	2	4%
5 th Pass	2	4%
N = 50		

The study revealed that a significant number of women (28 out of 50) had education above 10th standard, indicating a rising trend in higher education. In this study only 4 women had education below 10th standard, reflecting a decline in early school dropouts. The study showed that the number of women with postgraduate degrees (10 out of 50) is relatively high for a rural area, suggesting growing aspirations and improved access to education.

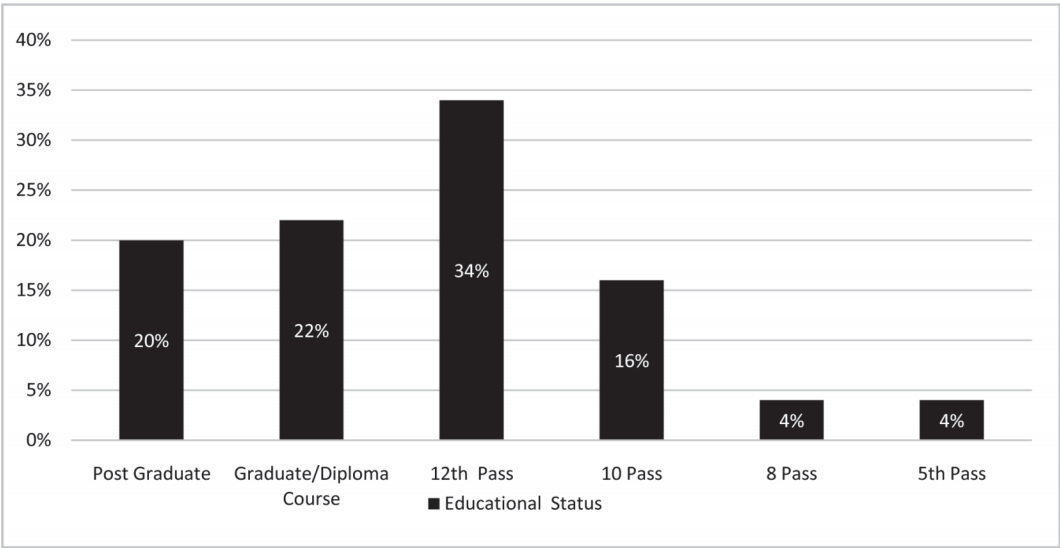


Figure No 1: Bar graph showing the Classification of Rural Women's Educational Status

Table No 2: Awareness on Financial Accounts and Policies among Rural Women

Status	No of Women	Percentage (%)	Degree/Angle
Aware	31	62 %	223.2°
Unaware	19	38 %	136.8°
Total	50	100 %	360°

The study revealed that the all 50 women are aware of their monthly savings but 19 women out of 50 are unaware of fixed deposits which pointing that there is a gap in financial literacy and safe investments among them.

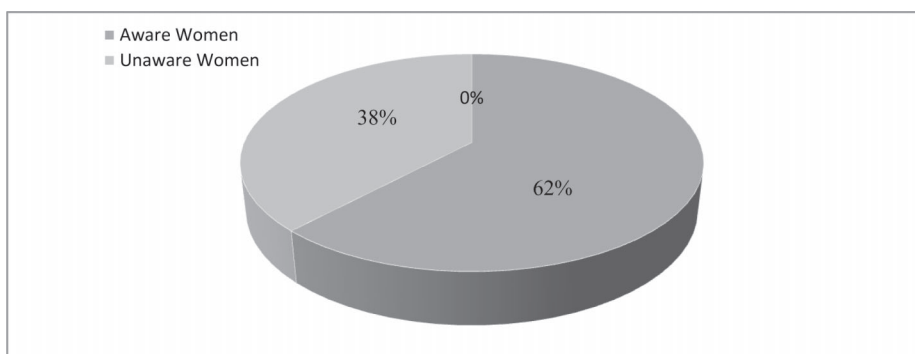


Figure No 2: Pie Diagram of awareness among rural women on financial accounts and policies

Table No 3: Classification of Socio – Economic Status of Rural Women

Socio – Economic Status Category	No of Women	Percentage (%)
Lower Socio – Economic Status	3	6%
Middle/Average Socio – Economic Status	14	28%
Upper Socio – Economic Status	16	32%
High Socio – Economic Status	17	34%
N= 50		

- 1. The study revealed that the high socio-economic status was observed in 34% of the women (17 out of 50), suggesting that a considerable portion of women enjoy better access to education, healthcare, income sources, and standard of living.
- 2. The study showed that the Upper socio-economic status accounted for 32% (16 out of 50), indicating a stable group that may have consistent income and basic amenities but still not fully economically empowered.
- 3. The study showed that the Middle socio-economic group included 28% of the women (14 out of 50), reflecting moderate living conditions, limited financial independence, and restricted access to opportunities.
- 4. The survey found that only 6% of the women belonged to the lower socio-economic class (3 out of 50), which shows that extreme poverty or deprivation affects a very small fraction of the population in this area.
- 5. The survey showed that the overall distribution revealed a positive socio-economic shift in the village, with over 66% of women falling in the upper and high categories, which may be a result of improved education, livelihood programs, or government interventions.

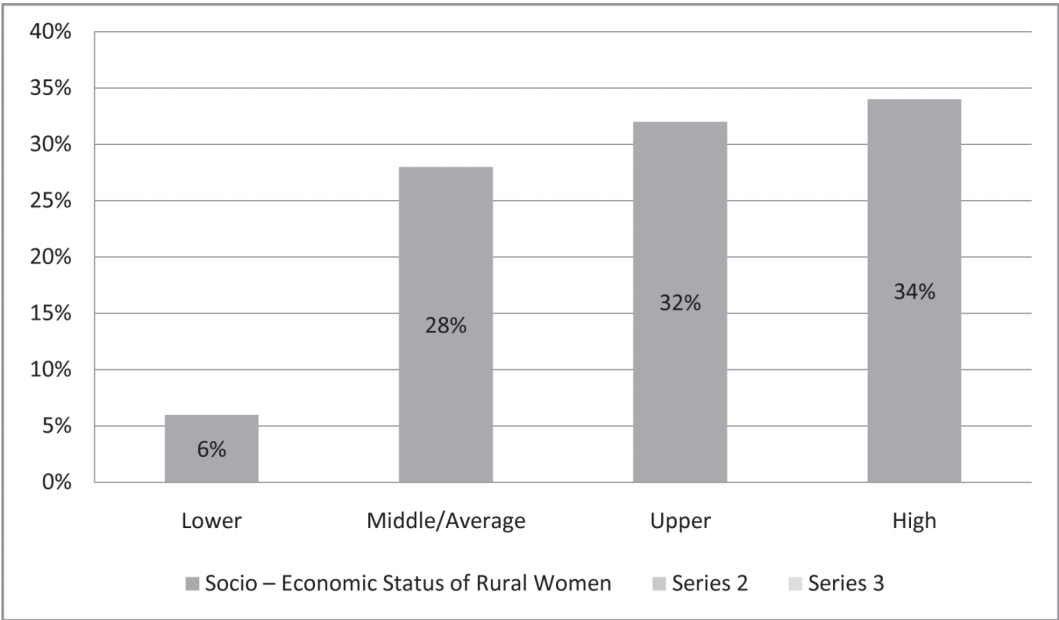


Figure No 3: Bar graph showing Classification of Socio – Economic Status of Rural Women

1.9 Major findings of the study:

The major findings of the present study are as follows-

- The study revealed that the number of 21 women out of 50 studied up to 12th standard which indicating a positive trend towards higher education among women.
- The study showed only 4 women out of 50 do not able to complete their school education.
- The survey showed that the 34% of women enjoy better access to education, healthcare, and income.
- The study found that 32% of women belong to a stable group with consistent income and primary facilities.
- The study found that 28% of women live with average resources and minimal access to opportunities.
- From the study Only 6% face poverty or have lower socio-economic status.

1.10 Conclusion and Suggestions:

The study reflects a positive direction in women's education and socio-economic status, but also, significant dissimilarities exist, with different levels of access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities among rural women.

From the study we found that there is a great difference in educational and socio-economic status among rural women of Nalkata village, Lakhimpur District, Assam. Therefore, the following suggestions should be given importance,

- To provide career guidance to motivate women to pursue higher and professional education.
- To Introduce skill-based training and vocational courses for women with education above 5th standard to enhance employability and entrepreneurship.
- Although early dropouts are low, continuous efforts like awareness campaigns, parental counseling, and incentives can help maintain or further reduce dropout rates.
- To promote success stories of educated women in the village to inspire younger girls and their families to prioritize education which helps to prevent early marriages.
- To Educate women on financial planning, savings, and investments to ensure long-term stability.
- To make aware women about the various educational policies & Acts such as SSA, RAMS, NEP-2020, RTE Act 2009 etc.

1.11 Further Research:

- Further studies can expand the scope by including various urban and rural villages or districts to enabling a comparative study across different area in Assam or other states.

- Further studies can extend its view by exploring the awareness and accessibility of government's schemes and policies among the rural women and urban women.
- Further research can be conducted to investigate the social participation between women of rural areas and women of urban areas.

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Women Empowerment through Weaving in the Handloom Industry: A Study in Assam

Rekhamoni Sharma
Kaushik Jyoti Chutia

ABSTRACT

Handloom weaving is an ancient textile art of making woven fabric in Assam. Handloom weaving industry is the biggest non agriculturally based industry that providing employment opportunities to the maximum number of households in Assam and has been played a crucial role towards women empowerment. Assam is extremely rich in heritage of handloom products due to the numerous distinctive ethnic groups present in the State. In Assam, the weaving traditions are existence since ancient times. Handloom weaving are those artistic creations that are reflected skilled craftsmanship, a rich cultural heritage, and a deep connection between nature and humanity. An empowered woman's contributions lead to financial security, social respect, and a distinct identity of its one's own, and setting in motion a positive cycle of growth and opportunity. Women empowerment through handloom weaving that

reduces poverty by enhancing their employment opportunities, enabling them to support their families and contribute to their communities. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study to analyse the handloom weaving as a tool for empowering the women in Assam. The paper also attempts to understand the various problems and obstacles faced by women weavers in the handloom industry.

Keywords: *Handloom, Women, Empowerment, Weavers, Assam.*

1.0 Introduction:

A Nation's or State's progress is closely tied to the advancement of its people when men and women are treated equally and given fair opportunities the chances for holistic societal and national development are significantly enhanced. Despite progress in gender equality where women remain economically disadvantage compared to men. They are disproportionately affected by poverty, underrepresented in the formal labour market and continue to shoulder the majority of domestic responsibilities. In case of India the position of women socially and economically is very poor and they are being considered as inferior and subordinate to men. To develop a nation both men and women are equally important and both play pivotal role. In developed country, the position of women is high in society as compared to developing countries. Empowerment is a process of enabling people to do their activities independently in different areas of life. Simply it means powering or enforcing people. It refers individuals acquiring the power to think and act freely, exercise choice and fulfil their potential as full and equal members of society (Lakshmi & Iyer, 2015). Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. It implies decentralization of power and authority in the deprived, oppressed and powerless people who have not been able to participate in decision making and implementation of policies and programs of both government organizations as well as in societal matters. Empowerment of women is not only essential but also imperative for all round development of a country (Saahay, 1998). It is a multilevel construct referring to individuals, organizations and community. It cannot be restricted to a particular aspect rather in many dimensions. So, empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, which should enable individuals or a group of individuals to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life (Nath & Anupama, 2008). Women could be empowered through the handloom sector because it provides largest employment opportunity to female. Through the handloom activities women weaver generate livelihood for their family and improve their social as well as economic status. It makes the women

economically empowered. In other words, we can say that handloom work as a tool for women empowerment. The government can use this sector as a huge growth driver for female weaver and has taken various steps and initiative to overcome the key issues arousing before the women weaver. We have also observed in our society that a group of women who are completely reliant on their husbands or even in their own affairs. Women are rarely going out without having any permission from them in laws and others. Women continue to dependent on their male equivalent for household responsibilities and various matters. So, equality remains an issue of primary priority of concerns. These occurrences highlight the extent to which our women depend on their male. So, these observations strongly emphasize the significance of empowering women.

1.1 Objectives:

1. To study the role of handloom industry as a tool to empower the women weavers in Assam.
2. To study the various issues and challenges faced by women weavers in handloom industry in Assam.

1.2 Review of Related Literature:

Chattopadhyaya, A (2005) in their study Empowerment is a multi-dimensional and refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action in all spheres (social, economic, and political) to shape one's life. It also implies control over resources and decisions.

Hazarika, D (2011) in his study finds that women are future of country's development. Empowering women will be the right approach for growth in his competitive world.

Kumar, P (2014) in his study that it is our need to identify the areas where women are still facing problems and are unable to access resources, institutional knowledge and basic education.

Lakshmi, K.J. & Iyer, S.R (2015) in her study Empowerment cannot be restricted to the boundaries of a particular nation rather it is an international and global issue. Being international it is involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources, gain greater access to and control over these resources.

Srivastava, R.S (2001) in his study women's empowerment from the perspective of their vulnerability to various kinds of exploitations. He envisages that it is necessary to "empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male domination and claim equality with them."

1.3 Methodology:

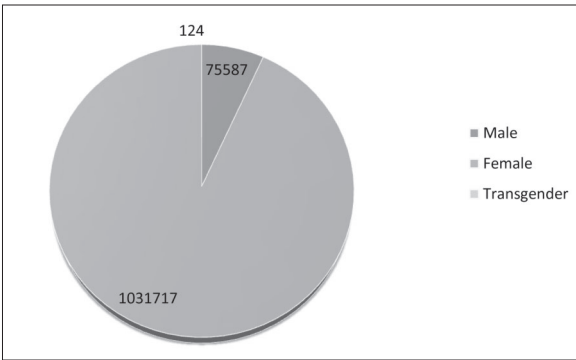
In this research paper, qualitative research method has been adopted to collect the data. So, the present study basically based on the secondary source of data. The secondary source of data was collected through government reports, references book, magazines, newspapers, articles, research paper, thesis, census data of handloom and some unpublished sources etc.

1.4 Findings and discussions:

Handloom weavers and women empowerment:

Women empowerment reduces poverty by allowing them to support their families, strengthen communities, and drive national progress. Education plays a crucial role for the local community’s economy to economic empowerment. Supporting women not only enhance a family’s financial stability but also strengthens food security. The empowerment can be social, political or economic and women can achieve economic empowerment through the handloom industry. The handloom industry plays a significant role in economic empowerment due to its large size and substantial employment potential. Handloom weavers plays a vital role in the handloom industry as they are directly involved in the production process. The handloom weavers with their refined skills that have been preserve over decades for future generations. The creation of handloom weavers serve as a reflection of their heritage, embodying both the essence of their homeland and the traditions passed through the generations. The handloom weavers and their craftsmanship are present in both urban rural areas across the state. According to the 4th handloom census, a total 1107428 of handloom weavers were recorded in Assam. The majority of handloom weavers are concentrated in rural areas. In term of gender distribution the weavers includes males, females and transgender individuals.

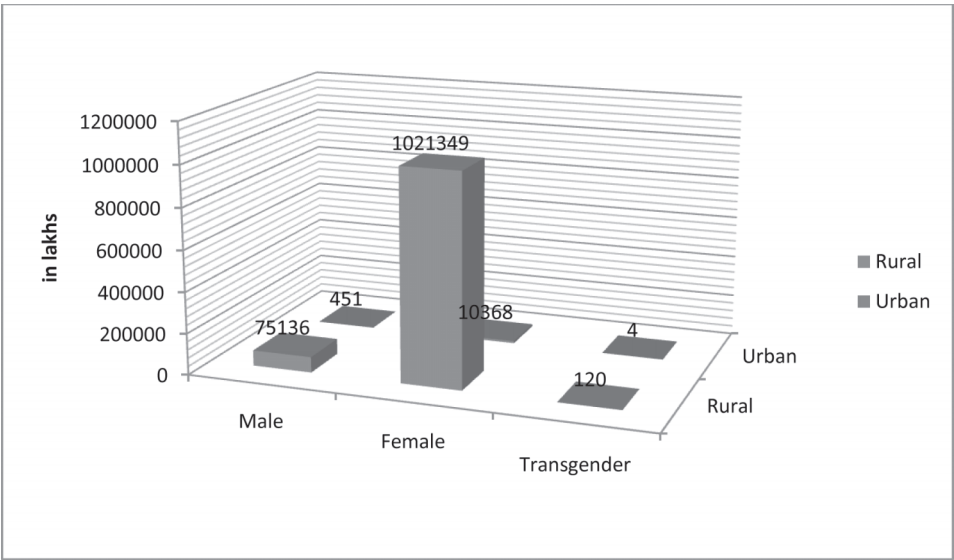
Figure 1: Gender wise number of handloom weavers



Source: Based on data ascertained from the 4th handloom census

In the pie-chart (figure 1) illustrates that the women constitute the majority dominance of total handloom weavers. In terms of number, the women weaver surpasses males and transgender by 1031717 with the 93.16% of the total 1107428 handloom weavers and the males and transgender respectively 75587 with 6.82% and 124 with 0.01%. The high percentage reflects their existence and artwork. It highlights that the numbers are fundamental to women empowerment. In the women weaver's participation is not only higher but they also hold a significant share in self employment.

Figure 2: Numbers of Rural and Urban handloom weavers



Source: Based on data ascertained from the 4th handloom census

In the bar chart (figure 2) illustrates that the women weavers constitute the majority dominances in rural areas. In the numbers of rural weavers surpasses the urban weavers by 1096605 with the 99% of total 1107428 handloom weavers where as the urban weavers by 10823 with the 1%. In the bar chart indicates that there are 1021349 female weavers in rural areas with the 98.99% of total while the urban areas have 10368 female accounting for just 1%. The high percentage reflects that the women weavers is dominated in the rural areas than the urban areas and also dominated over the other gender.

Handlooms play a vital role in the rural economy and offering the second largest source of employment opportunities for women weavers who holds a unique and integral role in this old-age tradition after the agriculture. Women handloom weavers

in rural areas not only dominated the sector but also share a wider gap compared to the other groups. This shows that how women handloom weavers in rural areas contribute to their significant contribution to the economy. This predominantly handloom sector is household-based which relies on the collective labour with entire families. With over the 70% of women engaged as a weavers and allied workers in this sector has ensured direct earnings for them and which economically empowerment through the financial autonomy.

Handloom and Women: Empowering through Internet:

Today, the internet has become an integral part of our daily life. The proper utilization of the internet enhances convenience, speed and simplicity in our daily lives. The internet helps us providing valuable information, resources, and opportunities that simplify tasks and enhance personal, social, and economic development. While its applications are vast, how we use the internet ultimately depends on our individual needs and objectives. The internet is a powerful tool that enables handloom weavers to connect directly with customers and eliminating the need for intermediaries. It open up new market opportunities and expands their customer base. The government and other organisations like commercial enterprises and NGOs are taking the initiative to create a digital literacy curriculum for weavers in order to integrate them into the mainstream and enable them to compete with the global business giants.

The concept of social networking has developed over the past 10 or 15 years where both local and global communication revolutionizing through social media. The internet is evolving with growing popularity of social media. Now days, social media has become the most effective platform for handloom product promotion and sales. In the recent times instead of just knowing how to use email and online shopping etc. the internet primarily provides the platforms like Blogs, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, Twitter and similar social media networks. These tools and technologies are the recent integral phenomenon of social networking and are widely accessible in everywhere. Women weavers in the handloom industry can use social media as a powerful source to raise the awareness about the handloom products, promote and unique their skills, create new job opportunities and boost of their product sales in cost effective manner. Social media presents a huge opportunity for the handloom industry particularly for women weavers who can use these platforms to reach a wider audience, connect directly with customers and eliminated the middlemen.

ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) play a crucial role in driving progress and can be effectively boost to enhance women's economic participation. The information technology sector has rapid growth and develops in recent times. The market institutions are boost the information technology to their advantage while

simultaneously offering enhanced benefits and opportunities in particularly in marketing services. The handloom organisation strengthen improvement through the marketing and export of handloom items, along with hosting festive fairs, exhibitions and digital advertisements etc., which contributes to the effective promotion of handloom products. In the recent times, the concept of buying and selling has evolved tremendously. The internet is overtaking television as the leading advertising platform. The government of India plays a vital role in helping the women weavers to connect to their customer right from their homes through digital India and skill India initiatives. The government's Womaniya project which offer an online marketing platform for woman.

Handloom and Women: Empowering through Government Initiatives:

The government of India has introduced and executed several schemes where mainly aimed to supporting women weavers with the help of Ministry of Textile and the office of the development commissioner where they serving as a key implementing authority. There are several key schemes have successfully reached women weavers to empower them including the National Handloom Development Programme, Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Development Scheme and Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development scheme. The National Handloom Development Programme provides the education facilities of handloom weavers and their children. The Ministry of Textiles has signed Memorandums of understanding with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) to secure educational facilities for the weavers and their families. NIOS offers secondary and senior secondary level education with specialization subjects on design, marketing, business, development etc. though the distance learning mode for handloom weaver, Whereas IGNOU offers continuing education programme through accessible and flexible learning opportunities relevant to the aspirations of the handloom weavers and their children for career progression. The ministry of Textile is providing reimbursement of 75% of the fee towards admission to NIOS/IGNOU course in case of SC, ST, BPL and women learners belonging to handloom weavers' families. The Comprehensive Handloom Cluster Development Scheme (CHCDS) is implemented for development of mega Handloom Clusters covering atleast 15000 to 25000 handlooms and financial assistance as GoI share from Rs. 40.00 to Rs 70.00 core in a period of 5 years. Under the scheme, components like conducting diagnostic study, engaging designer, product development, corpus for raw materials, construction of work sheds (for BPL/SC/ST/Women weavers), skill up gradation etc. are fully funded by Government of India, while the components like technology up gradations, design studio, including the computer aided design system, marketing complex, value

addition common infrastructure, publicity etc., are funded by the GoI to extent of 80%. The Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme is providing life, accidental and disability insurance coverage to handloom weavers/workers under the components Pradhan Mantri Jivan Bima Yojana (PMJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana(PMSBY) and converged Mahatma Gandhi Bumkar Bima Yojana(MGBBY). These are some important schemes initiated by the government to empower women handloom weavers.

Problems faced by Women Weavers in Assam:

The handloom industry of Assam though rich in tradition and cultural significance has faced numerous challenges over the years. The women weavers in Assam have face several challenges in their profession and these are as follows-

- The government's implemented the policies of welfare, which nearly maximum handloom weavers remain among the most marginalized and economically disadvantage group. The weaver communities are the illiterate and below poverty and accompanied poor access to basic services such as health care, clean water, sanitation, adequate housing and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

- Although the government has introduced various schemes and initiatives for the development of women weavers. Corruption and maladministration often hinder their proper implementation. As a result, the lack of adequate policy support, financial assistance and infrastructure poses significant challenges for handloom weavers.

- Many women weavers face various health issues such as stress, body pain, respiratory problems and eye strain, primarily due to sitting and concentrating in one position for extended hours, among these body pains are particularly prevailing. Additionally, working for more than half of the day has been linked to gynaecological complications.

- Most of the rural handloom women weavers face challenges in accessing efficient distribution channels. Although demand for weaving product is high in urban centres, many weavers operate in remote areas with limited connectivity. As a result, they are often forced to rely on middle man, who may exploit them.

- One of the major challenges facing the handloom industry in Assam is the lack of effective marketing and promotion, which significantly hampers its visibility among consumers.

- A major challenge facing the handloom industry is dominance of power loom, which can produce textile products at a much lower cost and at a faster pace. As a result power looms are better able to meet consumer demand compare to traditional handlooms.

- The handloom industry has a long struggle with limited innovation in designing and insufficient access to high quality raw materials. Cotton and silk yarn, the primary inputs for weaving are often difficult to procure at reasonable price, posing a widespread challenge across major production centres. Additionally, consistent access to raw materials, adequate credit and stable market remain some of the most pressing issues face by the sector.

- A key factor contributing to the declining fortunes of the weaver community is the lack of awareness about various government policies and schemes. In some cases, even the implementing agencies and relevant government department may have incomplete information, leading to significant gap in execution.

- In Assam, many women handloom weavers, especially in rural areas, where they have limited exposure to digital tools and social media platforms, which can restrict their access to broaden markets and better income opportunities.

1.5 Conclusion:

Women handloom weavers have played a vital role in shaping the socioeconomic development of society or nation. The handloom industry holds great potential to empower women, yet it remains underutilized at its full potential to empower opportunity. The art of handloom weaving has passed from generation to generation. Handloom weaving not only offers diverse opportunities but also enhances women's traditional craftsmanship, equipping them with essential skills in product development, small business management, and marketing. It empowers women weavers to overcome marginalization, poverty, and gender discrimination. These women weavers can become self-reliant by using their traditional skills with the help of marketing support, government aid, and access to basic training facilities. Empowering women is essential for a Nation's or State's inclusive growth. Women must be educated and empowered with unrestricted access to opportunities and this is the only path to true progress. Although the government has launched several initiatives to support women weavers, it is ironic that they still have not attained economic equality. The handloom sector deserves more attention as a key avenue for advancing women's empowerment.

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Gender Equality and Empowerment

Dipshikha Saikia

ABSTRACT

The conceptions of Gender Equality and Empowerment are correlated because enhance the gender equality in the society is the prime prerequisite for gender empowerment. Simultaneously, chasing of gender equality fundamentally requires the gender empowerment. Therefore, gender equality is vital to attain the aim of gender empowerment. Gender equality is a fundamental right of human and both gender equality and empowerment are essential for sustainable development. In present, gender equality and empowerment are obligatory for all genders to live a peaceful and prosperous life. Gender equality emphasizes the importance of providing equal political, social, cultural, spiritual, educational etc. opportunities and strength irrespective of caste, creed, class, religion, gender etc. Gender empowerment is a procedure through which all the genders can attain the strength and powers to make their own decisions, choices, live their life by own control and participate in all the activities and functions of communities and societies. Gender equality and empowerment includes removing the main sources of gender inequalities which leads

to gender empowerment. This article discusses or outline about the concept, existing problems, needs of gender equality and empowerment and how to promote gender empowerment through gender equality. Thus, the article briefly conceptualizes that gender equality and empowerment are the foremost and prime provisions for development and decrease poverty from a country. To discuss about the Gender Equality and Empowerment this article used descriptive method, which applied secondary sources of data consisting of journals, websites, research articles and so. Lastly this article concludes with some importance findings along with suggestions.

Keywords: *Gender Equality, Gender Empowerment, Men, Women.*

1.0 Introduction:

Gender Equality and Empowerment are very foremost for attaining peacefulness, prosperity, opportunities and sustainable development all around the world. Gender equality also encompasses that everyone, irrespective of gender should have freedom from discrimination and stereotypes. Equality between all genders exist when all the genders get equal opportunities for financial, educational, political, cultural, spiritual independence. This means both men and women enjoy equal powers and opportunities in all spheres of life. Basically, gender equality is a procedure of being equitable to both men and women and gender empowerment emphasizes to empower the all genders, especially those who face gender inequality based on gender specification. The concept gender empowerment advocates the procedure through which peoples, particularly women, attain equal power, strength, opportunities for all spheres of life.

As far as the “Vedas Purana” of Indian culture is concern, admired such as LAXMI MAA, goddess of wealth; SARASWATI MAA for wisdom; DURGA MAA for power (Nighoskar,2019). Although, as can be seen, even today women are deprived in many aspects as compared to man. The position of women in India particularly in remote and rural areas needed to be solve or address the issue of gender inequality and establish women empowerment. There are various reasons which leads to gender inequalities in India. For example: patriarchic structure of society, stereotypes rules and norms of society, poverty, child marriage, dowry system, lack of awareness, illiteracy, lack of legal protection etc. Therefore, to establish the gender equality in India, we should give importance to above mentioned points.

In today's, Gender equality and empowerment is very much essential for rapid grow of a country because it helps to attain economic, political, cultural, societal, sustainable etc. development of a country. We can also say that, attaining gender equality and women empowerment is crucial to create an equitable, inclusive,

harmonious, prosperous society. Empower the women through gender viewpoint refers the procedure of encouraging women's right, equality etc. It also helps to address the inequalities, imbalances, disempowerment between men and women and leads to enhance the women's access to education, healthcare and other opportunities. Therefore, gender equality is crucial for gender empowerment.

According to Census-2011, India has reached the population of 1210 million, as against 301 million in 1951, of which 58,64,69,174 (48.5 %) were females. The population of India accounted for 17.5% of the total world population and occupied second place. The sex ratio was 930 in 1971 and it has increased to 940 according to 2011 Census. The female literacy also increased from 18.3% in 1961 to 74.0% in 2011 and a decrease in male-female literacy gap from 26.6% in 1981 to 16.7 per cent in 2011. Among the world's 900 million illiterate people, women outnumber men two to one. 70% of people living in poverty are women (Nighoskar,2019). Therefore, there is a need for some government legal protections and provisions for women to outcome from poverty.

1.1 Review of Related Literature:

Kabeer (2005) conducted a study on "Gender equality and women empowerment: a critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal". This article discusses the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), on gender equality and women empowerment. It explores the concept of women empowerment and highlights ways in which the indicators associated with this Goal - on education, employment, and political participation - can contribute to it.

Sundar (2017) conducted a study on "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment". This paper sheds light on importance of gender equality and role of gender equality in women empowerment, gender concern in development and gender mainstreaming in development. This paper concludes with some interesting findings along with policy suggestions.

Chinwokwu & Arop (2018) conducted a study on "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment towards Sustainable National Development in Nigeria". This study examined the imperative for gender equality and women empowerment as basic to sustainable national development and growth in Nigeria and concludes with some important recommendations.

Mohapatra (2018) conducted a study on "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India: A Corporate Social Responsibility Perspective". This article, makes an attempt to understand corporate welfare involvement only in women empowerment & gender equality in India. Thus, this paper briefly contextualized women empowerment & gender equality in corporate social responsibility activities

and highlights major budgetary action, plan, and programmes of different corporate houses implemented to address the women empowerment & gender equality issues. And this article also places comparative analyses of the state-wise corporate social responsibility expenditure in relation to women empowerment & gender equality.

Atuase (2019) conducted a study on “Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Ghana, the Role of Academic Libraries”. This study examined the role of academic libraries in promoting gender equality and women empowerment. The study also proposes a conceptual framework as a new paradigm shift to academic libraries to promote gender equality and empowerment. And also recommended that libraries should provide comfortable and well-lit room that women can showcase their handwork and school work to better their lives.

Nighoskar (2019) conducted a study on “Gender Equality: Women Empowerment- An Overview”. This article critically discuss about the key determinants of inequalities and remedial action will be suggested to overcome it and will be proven how it relates with the new human rights.

Biswas (2024) conducted a study on “Women Empowerment from a Gender Perspective: A Study of Programmes and Policies and their consequences Introduction”. In this article, the researcher focuses on Women Empowerment through gender perspectives with reference to outcome of various program and policies in India.

Mueshed (2025) conducted a study on “Women Empowerment and Gender Equality: An Anthropological Perspective”. This article highlights the importance of gender equality to the development agenda and how gender inequality can undermine People’s Rights; suggests a new gender contract based on economic forces and the state to support sustainable empowerment and inclusive social development.

1.3 Methodology:

This article used descriptive method, which applied secondary sources of data consisting of journals, websites, research articles and so.

1.4 Analysis and Findings:

Gender equality is an essential or important human rights and women empowerment is related to sustainable development. Gender equality and women empowerment both are closely related to each other because for achieving women empowerment, first of all its important to achieve gender equality in the society. And both gender equality and empowerment give importance on both men and women can enjoy their rights, power, strength, opportunities equally. In this, analysis part we can briefly discuss about the existing problems, needs of gender equality and

empowerment and how to promote women empowerment through gender equality.

Existing problems of gender equality and empowerment: The issues and the problems for promoting gender equality and empowerment are not a new phenomenon. There are many causes which still exist in the society which create barriers to establish gender equality and empowerment. The existing problems of gender equality and empowerment are briefly discussed below:

1) Gender Division of labour: A major problem of gender equality and empowerment is Gender Division of labour. The process through which the work is divided between men and women as per their gender roles and norms is generally referred to as the “gender division of labour”. Even today, it seems that household chores like, cleaning, cooking, washing are typically women’s or girls’ work even if they have paid jobs outside of home. But it doesn’t seem to be the case of men. And on the other hand, the more technical household work such as electrical, mechanical tasks are typically a man’s work which has a negative impact on gender equality and empowerment. Therefore, we need to eradicate this type of gender division of labour from our society. In developing countries like India, women are always work in less paying and less skilled position in the labour market and don’t get preference for technical and skilled based work. It also seems that women are limited to only some of typical traditional jobs like, teacher, nurse etc. This type of society-based rules on occupation can lead to major problems to establish gender equality and empowerment. Therefore, it is important to provide awareness and skill-based education to women for gender equality and empowerment.

2) Child Marriage: Child marriage is also a key issue of promoting gender equality and empowerment. It is a harmful traditional and cultural practice that still exists in the society. When a boy or girl got married before the age of 18 is referred to as child marriage. Child marriage leads to child abuse, lack of educational access and violates their rights. Child marriage also may lead a girl to become a mother even when she is still a child at the same time which leads to complication during pregnancy and also there may be risk of maternal death as well as infantile death. When a girl got married as a child firstly, she lost her schooling and she will not be able to earn money and contribute to the economic growth of the community. She also may experience domestic violence from family which can negatively affect gender equality and women empowerment.

3) Poverty: Another major problem of gender equality and empowerment is poverty. According to the World Bank, 70% of people living in poverty are women. Women are immensely afflicted by poverty and are still economically not independent as compared to men. They get less pay than men for the same job or work which leads to economic inequality. Poverty is also a barrier for women or girls to access quality

education, healthcare, economic growth and also limit their autonomy and opportunities. When in the case of a poor family, the parents can't raise their children appropriately, and if it comes to choose about education, healthcare etc. the girls are always neglected over the boys which leads to gender inequality women disempower.

4) Patriarchal structure of society: patriarchy refers to a traditional and stereotypes gender roles where men have the strength, power and dominance in a society. It is a social structure where males are considered superior or powerful. Basically, it provides more power and control to men over the women which leads barriers to gender equality and women empowerment. The patriarchal system leads gender-based violence because it creates inequality in education, employment opportunities, economic growth of women and also women get less pay than men for the same occupation. It also seems in the patriarchy society that leadership is always occupied by males in all sphere of life which is another main problem for gender equality and women empowerment.

5) Lack of awareness: Lack of awareness regarding gender equality and empowerment contributes limited access to education, patriarchal mindset, dowry system, child marriage, domestic violence, poverty, lack of access to justice and also leads to perpetuation of pernicious practices and discrimination. Till today, Indian government has implemented various policies regarding women empowerment and decrease gender inequality but most of women or girls are not aware regarding these policies which leads to gender inequality women disempower.

6) Stereotypes rules and norms of society: Social rules and norms are unscripted and unwritten rules which control the individuals' behaviors in a society. There are such types of rules and norms of society still exists which can limit the women for their freedom, empowerment, decision making power, participate in societal events, create hinder in education and also leads gender inequality. There are so many societies that feel unwilling for women education and restrict the women to get education and employment and also recognize the males to dominate the women and control their lives.

These are some of the existing problems of gender equality and empowerment, for established a gender biased free or equitable society we should first cater these type problems from society.

Needs of Gender Equality and Empowerment:

Gender equality is our fundamental rights. Achieving gender equality and empowerment is very much essential for a country's growth and development. Establishing gender equality and empowerment is very important for reducing domestic

violence, child marriage, poverty etc. The needs of gender equality and empowerment are discussed below:

1) Achieving gender equality is very much needed because it is a key element of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Which gives importance on gender equality, empowering the all women and girls and also creating a sustainable, equitable and inclusive world.

2) Gender equality and empowerment can boost the economic growth of a country. When women have equal opportunities for education and employment, they can enrich the economic growth because involvement of women can increase man power in labour market.

3) Gender equality and empowerment is very much needed or important for all-round progress and well-being of the society. Because gender equality and empowerment can promote equitable and inclusive society for all also reduces poverty, conflict, domestic violence and empowered the women to participate independently in the society.

4) Gender equality and empowerment is essential for individuals because it aware the individuals about their rights, legal protections, safety and freedom. If a woman is empowered then she will be aware about her reproductive system very well which leads to a healthy life.

5) Till date, many women are not economically independent and dependent on men due to gender inequality and disempower. Therefore, gender equality and empowerment are very much needed for promoting gender equality, empowering the women which contribute to their access of education, health care, economically independent and also reducing poverty from society.

6) Gender equality and empowering women is also needed for removing the stereotypes social and cultural rule, regulations and norms from society. Because such types rules and norms can negatively effect on social development and also create barriers for women education, employment and equality.

From the above discussion, we can briefly know about the importance or needs of gender equality and empowerment to establish an equitable society.

How to promote women empowerment through gender equality: Promoting women empowerment through gender equality means enlarge the women's power, strength, opportunities, equal access to education, resources, politics etc. and also includes reducing gender inequalities.

The ways to promote women empowerment through gender equality are discussed below:

1) **Promote girls' education:** Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it ensures that all girl's should aware about their rights to education. And

make sure that they get equal access and quality of education. Also train the teachers for making inclusive, fair, unbiased and equitable classroom in the schools which cater the needs and requirements of all pupils.

2) Promote women's economic empowerment: Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it advocates that all women should get equitable access to entrepreneurship, resources, employment, economic opportunities etc. Gender equality emphasizes to provides business training, sponsorship, finance to women so that they can easily start a new business. And also ensure that both women and men get equal pay for the same work.

3) Promote women for political and social participation: Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it inspires the women to participate and make decision in the politics and society. And also advocates freedom full participation and encourages women for leadership position in the politics and society.

4) Promote healthcare of women: Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it ensures that all girls and women should aware about their own health and health care facilities and policies provided by government. And make sure that women get quality healthcare services and also gender equality helps to removes the matters such as, maternal health, infantile death, early pregnancy etc.

5) Promote awareness about gender-based violence: Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it emphasizes for implementing laws for addressing gender-based violence and also inculcate the peoples about the problems of gender-based violence and significance of addressing or preventing it.

6) Encourage women for leadership: Gender equality promotes women empowerment because it increasing the leadership quality of women and also make the women confident to take the leadership in all field such as politics, economics, societies etc.

These are some of the ways or procedure which are very much important or essential for promoting women empowerment through gender equality. From these ways we can easily create a society in which women have equal power, strength, opportunities for all.

1.5 Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it could be clearly seen that gender equality and women empowerment is essential for increasing economic growth and addressing poverty from a country. Both are crucial for sustainable development of our country and also important for establish social justice. But it is observed that, large number of women still don't have power, strength, autonomy, opportunities to live life according to their choice and also many women in India are facing different discrimination in

workplace, society or community, politics, education, healthcare etc. which leads to women's disempowerment. To address these problems, there is a need for different governmental policies and programs which promote gender equality and empowerment.

In the findings I would like to say that, gender equality and women empowerment is very much essential for all round development of the society, provides awareness to the individuals about their rights, legal protections, safety and freedom, removing the stereotypes social and cultural rule, regulations and norms from society, make women independent, boost the economic growth of a country and most importantly achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With the aim of promoting gender equality and women empowerment, the following suggestions can be considered:

1.6 Suggestions:

- 1) Involvement of women in taking decisions in the politics, economics, society etc.
- 2) Promoting equal placement opportunities and get equal pay for same work or labour between men and women.
- 3) Includes the gender equality and women empowerment related lessons in the curriculum.
- 4) Reducing stereotypes rules and reconstruct the society where both men and women have equal autonomy, opportunities, power for all.
- 5) Create special awareness about the women healthcare, through which women can briefly know about their own body and reproductive system.
- 6) Implement government policies to prevent gender-based violence and inequality.
- 7) Creating an inclusive school environment in which all gender feels equal.
- 8) Implementations of special schemes which supports girl's education at all levels.
- 9) Provides financial aids for promoting women entrepreneurship.
- 10) Formation of local NGOs for providing legal protections to women.

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A study on Women Empowerment Schemes, Constitutional Provisions and Legislations in India

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ABSTRACT

Empowerment is giving someone the authority, capacity, and self-assurance to manage their own life and make choices, often by equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources. In order for women to take charge of their lives, make their own decisions, and fully engage in the social, political, and economic realms, they must first be empowered. It entails dismantling social conventions that support gender inequality while granting equal opportunities, access to healthcare, education, and financial resources. A key component of India's growth is women's empowerment, which aims to guarantee social justice, gender equality, and women's economic independence. Issues like gender discrimination, income disparities, low political involvement, and violence against women continue to exist despite constitutional clauses and laws supporting women's rights. In order to ensure gender equality and advance women's rights, women's empowerment is a critical component of social and economic development in India. Through fundamental rights, guiding principles

and several clauses guaranteeing equality, protection, and opportunity, the Indian Constitutional provisions offers a solid basis for women's empowerment. The government has put in place a number of schemes and legislations to safeguard and advance women's rights in order to better boost women's empowerment. Thus, this paper aims to discuss women empowerment and its schemes, constitutional provision and legislation in India.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Women empowerment, Constitutional provision, Government schemes, Legislations.*

1.0 Introduction:

Women empowerment has emerged as a critical component of inclusive and sustainable development. Women's empowerment, broadly, is the process by which women achieve authority and control over their own lives, as well as the ability to make strategic decisions. It entails fostering women's self-esteem, as well as their ability to make their own decisions and affect social change for themselves and others. Since women were long denied the ability to make their own decisions, the term "women empowerment" refers to providing them with the courage and self-assurance to do so. Unfortunately, this disparity has persisted for a long time. Helping women move from being neglected and helpless to strong and independent has only recently been attempted. Women's rights were previously restricted in patriarchal civilizations. They were primarily restricted to domestic duties and were not allowed to vote or express their thoughts. Women gradually came to understand that they were created for more than just taking care of the home. They gradually began to dismantle these obstacles, and strong women started to emerge globally. In India, where gender disparities have deep social and cultural roots, the empowerment of women is both a constitutional mandate and a socio-political necessity. The Indian Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women, which are supported by a variety of legislation aimed at safeguarding their rights and encouraging their participation in all aspects of society. Over the years, both the national and state governments have established several plans and programs to address concerns like as women's education, health, employment, safety, and financial independence. However, the impact and reach of these activities continue to be evaluated and researched.

This research aims to study the Constitutional provisions, various schemes and legislations related to women empowerment in India.

1.1 Review of related Literature:

Singh and Singh (2020) conducted a study on “Women Empowerment in India: A Critical Analysis”. The objective of the study was examines women empowerment in India, various models and dimensions and constitutional safe guards as well as plans and programmes by the government and their implementation, indicators of women empowerment. And the finding of the study revealed that the country ranks low while comparing with other countries. There is need of reassessing and modifying programmes to achieve SDG-5 by 2030.

Fernandes and Koya (2017) conducted a study on “Women empowerment schemes, constitutional provisions and legislations in India - a study”. The objective of the study was to know the different Government of India schemes, Constitutional provisions, and legislations for women empowerment. The study is descriptive in nature, and based on secondary data sourced from books, journals, websites, etc.

Shah (2021) conducted a study on “A study of constitution of India and women empowerment”. The objective of the study was to analyze the status of women Empowerment as per the constitution of India and highlights the laws of constitution of India which are meant for women empowerment. And the finding of the study revealed that there is more need for doing empowerment of women in India constitutionally and there is more need to create an secured environment for women so that she should be able to express freely.

Satyanarayana (2019) conducted a study on “Constitutional and legal provisions for women in India”. The objective of the study was to present an outline of the constitutional and the legal provisions to protect women rights in India. And this study is based on the secondary data collected from various books, journals and websites.

Swain and Bal (2021) conducted a study on “Women empowerment: a study on Indian constitution”. The objective of the study was to study the theoretical perspective on women empowerment, role of Indian constitution on Women Empowerment and identify the hinderances in the path of women empowerment. And the finding of the study revealed that all these steps taken by the government there still need to focus on the problem behind the gap between theory and practice.

1.3 Methodology:

The study is descriptive in nature, and based on secondary data sourced from journals, books, websites, etc.

1.4 Main Findings of the Study:

1.4.1 Constitutional Provisions to Women Empowerment

Constitutional laws of India play an important role in empowering women by

providing gender equality, rights protection, and social justice. The Indian Constitution provides essential rights such as equality before the law, the prohibition of discrimination, and equal chances for employment. It also contains provisions such as particular measures for women's welfare and reserves for women in municipal government. These constitutional guarantees, coupled with several legislative changes, seek to remove gender inequities and provide an atmosphere in which women may fully engage in all parts of society.

Article 14- Men and women to have equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social arenas.

Article 15(1) - Discrimination against any citizen is prohibited on the basis of religion, race, caste, gender, and other factors.

Article 15(3) - A special provision allowing the state to make positive discrimination in favour of women.

Article 16- Equal opportunity in public appointments for all people.

Article 23- Bans human trafficking and forced work.

Article 39(a) - The State should direct its policies towards assuring all citizens men and women, equally, the right to means of living.

Article 39(d) - Equal compensation for equal labour applies to both men and women.

Article 42- The state will make arrangements to ensure reasonable and humane working conditions, as well as maternity leave.

Article 51 (A) (e) - To abandon acts harmful to women's dignity.

Article 300 (A) - Right of property to women.

73rd and 74th Amendment Act 1992- Women are entitled to one-third of the seats in panchayats and municipalities.

1.4.2 Government Schemes to Women Empowerment

Government programs play an important role in boosting women's empowerment by offering targeted assistance with education, health, skill development, and financial independence. In India, several efforts have been initiated to eliminate gender inequities and empower women, particularly in rural and marginalized regions. Schemes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and Ujjwala Yojana seek to enhance women's status by providing access to resources, opportunities, and protection. These programs demonstrate the government's commitment to establishing an enabling environment in which women may fully engage in social, economic, and political life, therefore contributing to national building and inclusive development.

1. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

The Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana accounts, which were launched as part of the

most popular “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” initiative, can be opened by parents of newborn girls. The mission’s goal is to increase the sex ratio by providing girls’ education. Here are some crucial elements about the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana scheme:

- The scheme is for 15 years.
- It can be extended up to 5 years at a time.
- Maximum annual investment - Rs. 1.50 lakhs
- Deduction for investment available u/s 80C (in the Old Tax Regime)
- Tax-Free Interest - 8.2% p.a. (much higher than FD)
- The amount can be used for the girl child’s higher education, marriage, etc.

2. Lakhpati Didi Scheme

It is an important women’s empowerment project in India. Under the plan, the government hopes to empower 2 crore women who work in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to accumulate capital of more than Rs. 1 lakh.

3. Drone Didi Scheme

The Drone Didi women’s empowerment initiative in India seeks to teach 15,000 workers from Self Help Groups (SHGs) to become drone operators. These trained ladies may undertake numerous economic tasks like delivering medications and groceries using drones and earn their income. They are also important in mapping the agricultural land to digitalize the land records across rural India.

4. Mission Indradhanush

Mission Indradhanush is an ambitious government initiative aimed at empowering women in India. The plan guarantees that pregnant women and children are fully immunized.

5. Mudra Yojana

The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana offers collateral-free loans to small company owners of up to Rs. 20 lakh (limit doubled in budget 24-25). With an enhanced budget for MUDRA loans, the emphasis is on giving additional loans to women-owned businesses.

6. TREAD Scheme

The Trade Related Entrepreneurship Development Assistance Scheme (TREAD) is a lesser-known women’s empowerment initiative in India. The goal of this program is to create female entrepreneurs. As a result, the government grants 30% of the total loan eligibility for female entrepreneurs up to Rs. 30 lakhs. The remainder of the loan is supplied by banks through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that strive for women’s empowerment and can handle huge finances.

7. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) gives free gas connections and discounted gas cylinders to BPL families. The project immediately benefits women by providing them with clean fuel to cook with.

8. Standup India Mission

The Standup India Mission aims to give loans ranging from Rs.10 lakh to Rs.1 crore to SC, ST, and women businesses. This loan covers up to 75% of the project's total cost. It is an excellent women's empowerment project in India, ensuring that female entrepreneurs receive the required funding.

9. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

Many people neglect the PMAY plan while discussing women's empowerment initiatives in India. However, it is worth noting that allotting PMAY dwellings to women is a significant step towards their empowerment.

10. Women's Helpline

A 24x7 hotline with a toll-free number 181 is available in all states and union territories in India to give immediate assistance to women impacted by abuse or other distress.

11. STEP Initiative

STEP is a government project in India that offers subsidies to institutes that undertake women's training courses. The program's goal is to provide women with work opportunities by developing their skills.

12. Mahila E-Haat Scheme.

As the name implies, it is an e-marketplace where women may promote their items. They may also use good product descriptions and photographs to entice buyers. It encourages Make in India while assuring women's empowerment.

13. The Mahila Samman Savings Certificate Scheme

The Mahila Samman Savings Certificate are two-year FDs for women in the Post Office. They can deposit up to Rs. 2 lakhs and receive 7.5% interest per year on their deposits.

14. Mahila Shakti Kendras

Mahila Shakti Kendras help women enhance their skills, learn computer literacy, and find work. They serve as a hub of women's emancipation, potentially laying the groundwork for contemporary India.

1.4.3 Women -Specific Legislation

Legislation plays an important role in improving women's empowerment by creating legal safeguards, encouraging gender equality, and rectifying historical injustices. In India, a number of laws have been created to protect and empower women, ensuring that their rights are not only recognized but actively enforced. These laws seek to eradicate prejudice, prevent violence, and promote equal chances for education, employment, and political involvement. From early enactments like the Hindu Succession Act, which guaranteed women inheritance rights, to more recent legislation like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and

Redressal) Act, 2013, India has gradually reinforced its legal framework to empower women. This legislation, when paired with constitutional protections under Articles 14, 15, and 16, demonstrate the country's commitment to creating an inclusive society in which women may reach their full potential. However, the efficacy of these laws is heavily dependent on their good execution, public knowledge, and active engagement from both the government and civil society.

- Plantation Labor Act, 1951
- Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- Foreign Marriage Act, 1969
- The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
- The Sexual Harassment of women at Workplace (Prevention, prohibition and

(Redressal) Act, 2013

- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013

1.4.4 Women Related Legislation

- The Indian Penal Code, 1860
- The Indian Evidence Act, 1872

1.4.5 Legal Rights to Women

The following legislations provided various rights and safeguards for women:

- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 is a comprehensive legislation that protects women in India from all types of domestic violence. It also applies to women who have been or are in a relationship with the abuser and have experienced any type of violence, whether physical, sexual, mental, verbal, or emotional.

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956 is the most important piece of law for preventing trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. In other words, it prohibits the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of prostitution as an organised means of survival.

- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987 aims to more effectively prohibit the crime of Sati and its glorification on women.

- Maternity Benefits Act 1961 governs the work of women in specific enterprises for a specified period before and after childbirth, and provides for maternity and other benefits.

- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1971) allows certified medical practitioners to terminate some pregnancies on humanitarian and medical grounds.

- The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994 prohibits sex selection before or after conception, as well as the misuse of pre-natal diagnostic techniques for sex determination, which can result in female feticides.
- The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 allows a Muslim wife to seek the dissolution of her marriage.
- The Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986 protects the rights of Muslim women who have divorced or received divorce from their spouses.
- The Family Courts Act of 1984 establishes family courts to help families resolve problems quickly.
- The Indian Penal Code 1860 includes rules that protect Indian women against dowry killing, rape, abduction, cruelty, and other crimes.
- The Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 includes specific safeguards for women, such as a person's need to support his wife, the arrest of a woman by female police, and so on.
- The Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872 contains provisions pertaining to marriage and divorce in the Christian community.
- The Legal services Authorities Act of 1987 gives free legal assistance to Indian women.
- The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 established monogamy and permitted divorce on specific defined conditions. It gives Indian men and women equal rights in terms of marriage and divorce.
- The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 recognizes women's equal right to inherit parental property.

1.5 Conclusion:

Women empowerment remains a cornerstone of a progressive and inclusive society. The social, economic, and political standing of women has improved significantly in India because to a number of government initiatives, constitutional clauses, and legislative actions. Women now have better access to healthcare, education, and financial independence thanks to programs like Stand Up India, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Ujjwala Yojana. Articles 14, 15, and 16 of the Indian Constitution guarantee equality and reaffirm the state's commitment to gender justice. In addition, legislations such as the Maternity Benefit Act, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act offer a strong legal foundation for defending women's rights.

Issues including gender-based violence, pay inequality, and underrepresentation in decision-making bodies continue in spite of these initiatives. As a result, it is

crucial to guarantee that these rules and plans are properly implemented, understood, and monitored. Only when women are actively involved and leaders in the development of the country, rather than merely receiving benefits, will true empowerment be achieved. To establish an environment where every woman may live with equality, dignity, and freedom of choice, a collaborative strategy involving the government, civic society, and people is essential.

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Advancing Women's Education and Empowerment: An Analysis of the Impact of NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

Women play a significant role in transforming the overall well-being and socio-economic development of any nation. However, history shows that the status of women and their empowerment in India has been a controversial topic and concern from the past. While women have been an integral part of the society's well-being, developing the culture since ancient times. In this global era, women are still lagging behind in perceiving education or improving the literacy rate. In the contemporary context, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 lays a foundational framework for reforming the educational environment with a focus on inclusivity, which is directly or indirectly influenced by women, who face socio-economic and traditional restrictions on studying. The NEP 2020 anticipates the urgency of women's empowerment through education in various stages of their lives. This study analyzes the role of

NEP 2020 in advancing women's education and empowerment through various strategies such as ensuring quality and inclusive education, promoting lifelong learning, enhancing accessibility in education, and reducing dropout rates. And also, this study looks at the importance of women's empowerment through education as well as the role of this policy towards empowering them. Using a descriptive and qualitative research methodology, this study draws on secondary data sources, including articles, journals, websites, e-books, official reports, and so on. The findings underscore the importance of transformative reforms in education that directly address gender disparities and foster an inclusive environment for the holistic development of women.

Key words: *Women education, Women empowerment, Equality, NEP 2020, and Key provisions.*

1.0 Introduction:

“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family, women empowered means mother India empowered” (PT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU).

Women education is the cornerstone for leading a sustainable life and also for societal well-being. For the socio-economic development empowered women must be needed, because women have all the potential to increase the growth of the country (Anuradha Parasar & Ghatge Kashinath, 2022). In any nation, women have been an integral part of the society, play a significant role in transforming the overall well-being and development of the society. However, history shows that the status of women and their empowerment in India has been a controversial topic and concern from the past. While discussing women's empowerment, it can be said that even in this global era, women are still lagging behind in perceiving education or improving the literacy rate. Education is the key driver to fostering a conducive environment, where no one can feel deprived or unequal and transform the traditional viewpoint of society and play a critical role towards empowering women and overall development. Education is a birthright for human being, whether it is men or women. But over the past decades, women have always found difficulties in owning their own birthright. Education, as a core element, not only helps to enhance the societal structure but also helps in improving the quality of living at home (Bhat, 2015). In Ancient India, during the early Vedic period, women were regarded as mother goddess (Shakti) (Dr. Manisha Dwivedi & Mrs. Sonal Malik, 2022). In this period women received equal education, they have the freedom to choose their husbands, even though the patriarchal society was prevalent. Early Vedic period is one of the rich and developed periods mainly for the upliftment of the educational status of the girls and

women(**Sangeeta Ray, 2017**). However, this situation began to decline in the later Vedic and post- Vedic periods, when patriarchal norms became stronger, and restrictions on women's education increased (**Chakravarti, 1993**). In the Buddhist period offered a relatively progressive space for women's education, especially in the religious and spiritual aspects. Though not completely free from gender biases, this era was a crucial step forward in the historical journey of women's intellectual empowerment in India. During the medieval period in India, women's education witnesses a significant decline compared to others period. Historically, the medieval period is attributed as the 'dark age' for women in India (**Indianetzone.com**). Social evil practices such as early Marriage, Sati, Jauhar, purdah system, slavery system was restriction on Women Education in Medieval India. Women's education was mostly limited to households' chores in between the four walls of house. In Islamic rule, elite Muslim women might have received education in privately, especially in Persian, Arabic, and religious texts, but such cases were exceptions. Though, the medieval period was marked by patriarchal norms that discouraged formal education for most women, males are the main evil for women education. After medieval period, in 19th century, women's education faced significant challenges. The state of women's education in India before the 19th century was starkly deficient, characterized by a pervasive lack of access to formal learning. The 19th century witnessed the rise of several social reform movements that challenged the existing societal norms and advocated for women's education(**21kschoolteam**). According to the reformers, women's education will play an important role in alleviating poverty in the country. Thus, the 19th century was a transformative period for women's education in India, driven by the tireless efforts of social reformers who envisioned a more equitable society.

The demand for girls' education picked up in India after the British parliament, via a clause in the charter of 1813, permitted the missionaries to operate in the territories controlled by the East India Company(**21kschoolteam**). In British colonial era, movement for women's education was grown. Educational institutions were set up, and before independence various strategies taken to uplift the status and literacy rates of women.

The Indian government has introduced various policies for women to promote women's education and women's literacy rate. Improving women's education is essential and brings a positive impact on health and economic trends. After independence, in 1948 the University Education Commission established for shaping modern Indian higher education. This commission laid emphasis on women's education and acknowledged the critical role of women in society- not only as mothers and homemakers but also as contributors to the nation's social, economic, and intellectual

life. The constitutional provisions such as article 15,16, 21(A), 45 was mainly emphasis on prohibit gender discrimination, providing free and compulsory education from 6 to 14years, and declared that education as fundamental right for all. In 1958, The National Committee on women's education advocates for separate schools for girls in conservative areas, allocate hostel facilities and scholarships, and recruitment of more female teachers. This is the first committee which focused effort to understand the challenges faced by girls and women in education. After independence there has been tremendous progress in the status of women education. The women education rate of India has increased from 8.6 percent in 1951 to 64.63 percent in 2011 census. It is happened only due to various policies, schemes and programs which were encouraged for women education. The Government has also shown a strong commitment towards equal education for all. Education for all is one of the major tasks carried out by the Indian Government (Dr.Dilip M. Javalkar, 2017). In the scenario of pre- independence and post-independence various policies, commission, programs, and schemes has been taken by the government to uplift the women's education, but women's literacy rate in comparison to men still low. For growth and development of a society or any nation's education for men or women must be equal, both like a wheeler, if women are left to getting education, then development should not be possible. Considering the importance of women education, after 34 years, followed by National Policy on Education 1986, the Government of India designed an education policy National Education policy (NEP) 2020 to create a more inclusive society, where women's education has a significant place. This policy has the potential to uplift the women's status regarding their education and empowerment, and considering the necessity of women's education this policy directly or indirectly taken various strategies. This study will help to understand the power of educated women, and necessary steps towards empowering them.

1.1 Objectives:

1. To study the key provisions on women education by NEP 2020.
2. To study the importance of empowering women through education in the context of NEP 2020
3. To study the relationship between women education and economic development.

1.2 Research Methodology:

This study uses a descriptive and qualitative research methodology with secondary data analysis to seek advancing women's education and empowerment in the context of NEP 2020. The present study is analytical in nature. Keeping in view the nature of

study, the research methodology has been adopted. According to the need of this study, the data utilized is purely from secondary sources i.e. research papers, journals, theses, and other similar sources. A comprehensive search was conducted using the following online databases: Google, Google Scholar, ERIC, Springer, etc.

1.3 Significance of the study:

“No expectation of the progress of a family or a country can be achieved, where women are not educated and are leading a pitiable life” (**Swami Vivekanand**). This statement lays the significance of advancing women’s education and empowering them. In a developing country like India, where women comprise half of the population, ignoring their education and empowerment would significantly hinder the nation’s development. Women’s high literacy rates must be necessary for socio-economic development, as women are the first teachers of their child means future of the nation. So, there are numerous significances of advancing women’s education and their empowerment. While women are well educated, they have the potential to break down the cycle of poverty, eliminate gender stereotypes, reducing gender gaps, owning their own right, and persists their own place in the society and at last developing the country.

1.4 Literature Review:

Nath & Saikia (2021) explored “The role of NEP 2020 in promoting women’s education in India”. This paper investigates the significance of women education and the challenges of women education and also the role of NEP 2020 to promote their education. This paper stated that in the 21st century, women are still lagging behind in perceiving education. NEP 2020 is a comprehensive document that influences women’s education directly or indirectly and takes several initiatives, like accessible, equitable, quality, and flexible education for marginalized, socio-economically disadvantaged groups; providing scholarships for economically weaker sections; giving importance to education for all; creating a special strategy for socio-economically disadvantaged groups; and providing basic education to adult people. This paper utilizes a qualitative research method and collects data from both primary and secondary sources. This study found that to achieve women’s education effectively, NEP 2020 is a very significant document, but it depends on how effectively to implement this policy to tackle the historic issues.

Singh Parihar, Ghanghas, & Ahamed Khan, study the “National Education Policy 2020 and gender inclusiveness”. This paper investigates the significance of reducing the gender disparities and achieving the SDGs goals effectively. Eliminating gender disparities and discrimination is the key to achieving a more inclusive

environment and promoting women's education. This paper stated that for the past decades, women have faced tremendous discrimination for owning their own rights. NEP 2020 lays a foundation for providing accessible, equal, and quality education for all. This paper uses a descriptive method for Analyzing the impact of NEP 2020 and their recommendation for gender inclusivity and collects data from secondary sources like papers, journals, articles, etc. This paper found that to achieve a 100% literacy rate, it is important to provide education for all and also reduce the high dropout rates. By removing disparities, effective implementation of this policy has the potential to achieve quality and inclusive education.

Baidya & Baidya (2023) discussed on "Empowering women's education in the perspective of NEP 2020". This paper examines the significance of empowering women through education, initiatives undertaken by the NEP 2020. This paper stated that historically, women faced tremendous hindrances to education. It is essential to provide quality and inclusive, equal education to all girls so that they can make positive contributions to society. Despite various policy efforts towards educating girls, the literacy rate of women remains low. NEP 2020 prescribes various strategies to promote quality and inclusive education, such as gender-inclusive funds, ensuring equitable and quality education, developing infrastructures, providing scholarships for socio-economic disadvantage groups, addressing gender disparity, etc. For effective implementation of these strategies, we need to change from the grassroots level and create awareness among all; then this policy will be able to eliminate the traditional socio-economic issues. This paper uses secondary sources for collecting data from articles, papers, journals, etc. This paper found that women would be empowered when they get their rights, and to achieve it, quality education is the key.

Sardar & Paria (2024), explored "The challenges and opportunities of women's education in the context of NEP 2020." This paper examines various challenges and opportunities of women's education. This paper stated that the main aim of NEP 2020 is to change the educational environment and eradicate the socio-economic and cultural barriers towards educating the girls. This paper stated the major challenges of women's education, such as gender disparity, lack of awareness, limited access to digital technology in rural areas, lack of infrastructure, lack of positive attitude, etc., which hinders women's education. However, this policy also emphasizes various strategies to navigate these challenges, such as promoting equitable and quality education, providing flexible education and financial help, reducing dropout rates, universal and free education, promoting vocational education, integrating digital technology, and so on. This paper uses both descriptive and qualitative research methodology. The data were collected from the secondary sources, like articles,

journals, e-books, websites, etc. This paper found that NEP 2020 has the potential to empower women by ensuring equitable and quality education for all.

1.5 Objectives Wise Analysis:

1. To study the key provisions on women education by NEP 2020

Education is crucial for empowering women. Women's education is a key indicator of economic and social development. Over the years, India has made significant improvements in women's literacy rates and enrollment in schools. However, due to socio-economic barriers, gender disparities, limited access to education, lack of transportation, early marriage, etc., continuously hinders women's active participation in the education system. Recognizing these issues, the National Educational Policy (NEP 2020) introduced a comprehensive framework to promote gender equality and inclusivity, ensuring that all girls, transgender people, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups receive equitable learning opportunities at all levels. This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is, Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower (NEP, 2020). The global education development agenda reflected in Goal 4 (SDG4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015, seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. Such a lofty goal will require the entire education system to be reconfigured to support and foster learning so that all of the critical targets and goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can be achieved (NEP 2020). To achieve this goal, women's education must be prioritized, and the National Educational Policy (2020) introduces various strategies to enhance women's access to quality education. These initiatives or key provisions are as follows-

- **Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for all:** It is a border section. By aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 (quality education) and RPWD Act, this policy emphasizes that education is the key to achieving social justice and equality. Indeed, an essential goal is to provide equitable and quality education; education is the birthright of everyone. It is essential for achieving an inclusive and equitable society where everyone has opportunities to contribute to the nation and develop themselves. The education system must aim to include all children in mainstream education, ensuring that no one is left behind due to their caste, religion, gender, socioeconomic background, marginalized groups, etc. This policy aims to bridge the gap between gender disparities and provide quality education for all. Thus, this broader provision is indirectly related to promoting women's education and improving their circumstances (NEP 2020, section6, NEP 2020).

- **Eliminating gender gaps in education:** There are various policies that have made progress towards reducing gender gaps at all levels of education, but large disparities still remain. This policy aims to bridge the gender gaps in school education by ensuring equitable and inclusive education for all, particularly focused on socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs), especially for girls (**NEP 2020, section 6.2, p. 24**).

- **Providing Bicycles:** Due to a lack of transportation facilities, many of the girl students, basically from rural areas, are discontinuing their education, so the NEP 2020 has taken a very significant initiative to eradicate this problem as well as gender disparity and social stereotypes. The major provision is to provide free bicycles for all girls to attend educational institutions without any barriers (**NEP 2020, section 6.5, p. 25**).

- **Special Education Zones (SEZs):** Regions with large populations from educationally disadvantaged SEDGs groups, including women, will be declared as Special Education Zones (SEZs), which require targeted support for improving their educational development. To promote education, all the schemes and policies are effectively implemented in order to change their educational landscape (**NEP 2020, section 6.6, p. 26**).

- **Provide quality education:** From the past, history shows that women cut across all underrepresented groups. Women always face exclusion and gender inequality. This policy recognized that women play a critical role in healthy societal development; therefore, it is necessary to provide quality and accessible education for girls to promote their status, not only for the present but also for future generations (**NEP 2020, section 6.7, p. 26**).

- **Gender- Inclusion Fund (GIF):** The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduces the Gender- Inclusion Fund (**GIF**) to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. This fund will support States in implementing initiatives such as provisions of sanitation and toilets, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc. for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education. This fund will also enable States to support and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education. This policy aims to eliminate gender disparity in access to education for all, and ensure equitable, quality education for children from any socio- economically disadvantaged groups (**NEP 2020, section 6.8, p26**).

- **Provisions of Free Boarding facilities:** Free boarding facilities will be established matching the standard of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya's- in school locations where students, particularly girls from socio-economically disadvantaged

groups, may have come to from far, ensuring safety for all, at all levels. This includes strengthening and expanding Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya's (KGBVs) to increase participation of girls to Grade 12 and provide high quality educational opportunities for girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (NEP 2020, section 6.9, p. 26).

- **Infrastructure facilities:** The NEP 2020 focuses on improving infrastructure and resources to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream school. Schools and school complexes will be equipped with necessary resources including special trained educators and resource rooms, to cater the diverse need of student with disabilities. For welcoming student with disabilities educational institutions will adhere to the RPWD Act, making schools physically accessible and also assistive technology, accessible learning materials, such as Braille and large-print textbooks, will be provided. Efforts will also be made to promote inclusive participation in all school activities, including arts, sports, and vocational education, while ensuring the safety and security of children with disabilities. These measures aim to create an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students (NEP 2020, section 6.11, p.26).

- **Coordination of Scholarships and schemes:** All scholarships and schemes for socio-economically disadvantaged groups, especially for women will be coordinated and announced through a single agency and website. This aims to ensure that all students are aware of, and may apply in a simplified manner on such a 'single window system', as per eligibility (NEP 2020, section 6.18, p.28).

- **Gender-Inclusive Curriculum:** This policy emphasizes to develop a gender-sensitive curriculum that promotes equality and eliminate stereotypes, encouraging girls to active participation in all fields, including those traditionally dominated by males (NEP 2020).

- **Reduction of Dropout rates and promote universal access to education:** To address the factors contributing to higher dropout rates and hindrances to attain education among girls, this policy emphasizes ensuring universal accesses to education at all levels. This includes the improvement of essential infrastructure and the establishment of high-quality educational institutions, particularly in disadvantaged areas. These measures aim to enhance accessibility and create a more conducive and welcoming school environment for socio-economically disadvantaged groups especially for girls, thereby promoting sustained enrollment and active participation (NEP 2020).

These provisions and along with others collectively aim to create an inclusive and supportive educational environment that empowers women and promotes gender equality across all levels of education.

2. To study the importance of empowering women through education in the context of NEP 2020.

The importance of empowering women through education cannot be overstated. Women's education is a crucial factor in achieving economic growth and social development. Over the years, India has made significant improvements in women's literacy rates and enrollment in schools. However, socio-economic barriers, gender disparities, limited access to education, lack of transportation, early marriage, and other factors continue to hinder women's active participation in the education system. It is necessary to address the problems of gender inequality and other barriers that hinder the smooth progress of any society. By promoting equitable, accessible, and quality education to women, a country can increase its high-level literacy rate and, at the same time, can boost economic growth to a great extent. Education plays a pivotal role in empowering women through increasing awareness among the women about their rights so that they can enjoy them with their full potential. Women's education is very much needed to empower women, achieve gender equality, and promote sustainable development. When women are well educated, they can contribute immensely to the welfare of their families as well as to the development of any society. Therefore, it is most necessary to promote women's education with adequate educational resources. The National Education Policy recognizes the significance of women's education and empowerment and designs various schemes and programs so that women receive their own rights and access barrier-free opportunities at all levels to develop themselves. When we talk about the importance of empowering women, it's necessary to know the meaning of women empowerment. Women's empowerment is the process by which women become aware of gender-based unequal power relationships and acquire a greater voice with which to speak out against the inequality found in the home, workplace, and community. It involves women taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, solving problems, and developing self-reliance (unescwa.org). Women empowerment is primarily about uplifting the social, economic, and political status of women, particularly the underprivileged ones, and it also borders on the process of guarding or protecting them against violence (Suresh & Sivakumar, 2017). So, women's empowerment involves promoting their sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to change the society. The concept is grounded in the principle of gender equality, which emphasizes that men and women should have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities because by birth they are human beings and gender is socially constructed.

Empowerment goes beyond simply providing equal opportunities; it focuses on transforming power relations and dismantling the social barriers that restrict women's

freedom and potential. This includes addressing issues such as gender disparity, social stereotypes, gender-based violence, lack of opportunity to access education and healthcare, male dominance, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. Therefore, to dismantle these kinds of systematic barriers, quality and inclusive education is crucial. And after the 34 years of the National Education Policy 2020, anticipate the urgency of empowering women through education for the following reason:

- **Breaking the cycle of poverty:** When women are educated, then they have the potential to work independently and live their lives accordingly. The NEP 2020 takes various strategies to educate women at all levels to enhance their capability and break the cycle of poverty.

- **Reducing gender inequality:** As we know, women's empowerment means helping them become aware of their rights, responsibilities, power, etc. When women get quality education without any restrictions and systematic barriers, they are able to raise their voices against gender inequality, gender stereotypes, and violence against women. And will be able to take the right pathway to eliminate the issues.

- **Addressing social-cultural barriers:** Education helps women to overcome the traditional barriers where women were placed only in household work or as caretakers. But while women are educated, they mitigate the challenging discriminatory practices and promote social change.

The importance of empowering women through education is not limited to accessing educational opportunities but also to getting the leadership place at political parties, enhancing decision-making quality, voicing opposition against trafficking, and, most importantly, knowing their potentiality. According to UN Women, 2021 empowerment is critical for achieving sustainable development, as empowered women contribute to economic growth, poverty reduction, and more resilient communities. By prioritizing women's empowerment through education, NEP 2020 aims to create a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable society where women can live with dignity, freedom, and equal opportunity and realize their full potential and contribute to shaping the world around them.

3. To study the relationship between women education and economic development.

Women have been recognized as a vital force in the socioeconomic development of any nation. However, their lives were traditionally confined to the house, where they were primarily engaged in household chores, childcare, and other work in between the four walls of the house, which hindered their opportunities and status in society. The prevailing patriarchal society perpetuated the deprivation of their basic rights, including access to education. But, with the advent of various legislations, social

reforms, and women's movements worldwide, there was a major shift in the socio-cultural setup, and women's entitlement to education began to be recognized as pivotal for nations' economic development. On the other hand, history has revealed that on the Indian subcontinent, there was a worst-case scenario for women's education. Women were denied their basic right to education, and such bias was deeply rooted in the prevailing socio-cultural setup where females were treated as inferior to men. But, in the backdrop of various social reform movements, women's movements, Christian missionaries, and new economic reforms of 1991 popularly called the LPG concept (Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization), women's education in India witnessed a drastic change (**Azra Khan et al.**). Bridging the educational gender gap promotes gender equality, and it is vital both inside and outside the classroom in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for people of all genders. Increases in the number of women educated in a region are linked to high levels of development, such as the development of the economy (**Md Asadullah & et al.**).

Women's education is a vital cornerstone for the progress of any society. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without significant investment in female education (**Kakkar & Kakkar, 2017**). Education helps to unlock their potentiality, fostering gender equality and improving health and well-being. The landscape of women's education in India has evolved considerably, characterized by persistent challenges and progressive advancements. Historically, women faced systematic barriers to education due to socio cultural norms, gender discrimination, social taboos, early marriage, and lack of support. These obstacles not only deprived women of owning their birthright but have also hindered national development, as women's education served as a catalyst for broader societal and economic changes. According to several studies, illiterate women have a higher risk of fertility and mortality, as well as low nutritional status, limited economic potential, and limited household autonomy (**Md Asadullah et al.**). Education is not limited to imparting knowledge and skills but is also a powerful force for mitigating gender stereotypes, promoting gender equality, and reshaping society. Government initiatives, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots movements have played pivotal roles in breaking down barriers and providing educational opportunities for millions of girls (**Shoba Suri, 2024**). As policies change and adapt to meet emerging needs, they will likely witness a positive transformation. The relationship between women's education and socio-economic development stands as a cornerstone in India's pursuit of progress and equality. A substantial body of evidence unequivocally demonstrates the positive correlation between girl-child education and economic growth in India. Educated girls form a dynamic and skilled workforce, contributing significantly to productivity and innovation. Studies consistently show that increasing female labor force

participation is associated with higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and improved economic outcomes for the nation (Shoba Suri, 2024). Research shows that no country can achieve their sustainable goal without a significant literacy rate of women. Education is regarded as one of the milestones of women empowerment due to how it equips or enable them to tackle challenges, handle traditional roles, and also change their lifestyles (Bhat, 2015). The overarching goal of empowerment initiatives is to ensure gender equality and inclusion in a bid to develop a smart and sustained economy development with women having equal access to economic, social, and political opportunities (Yada & Singh, 2020). More notably, the actualization of sustainable human development will be highly unlikely if the women's population is marginalized, ignorant, and discriminated against (Oyitso & Olomukoro, 2012).

Various studies revealed that across the world there exists a strong positive relation between women's education and economic development. Research posits that a clear correlation exists between women's literacy levels and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and it has been found that an increase in literacy levels from 20% to 30% results in an enhancement in GDP from 8% to 16% for a number of countries worldwide (Tilak & Jandhayala, 1987). Research posits that in order to increase labor productivity and economic development, women's education in India must go beyond the elementary level (Geeta Gandhi, 2001). In order to achieve robust economic development, education beyond an elementary level is a prerequisite. Further, it is pertinent to note that with the major reformation of the Indian economy in 1991 (liberalization, globalization, and privatization), popularly called the "LPG concept," India has achieved strides in economic development, not only remarkable improvement over the last decades for both men and women (Azra Khan et al.).

The relationship between women's education and economic development is both profound and multifaceted, influencing various aspects of societal progress and individual well-being. Investing in women's education not only enhances their personal abilities but also enhances economic growth, reduces the gender gap, decreases the fertility rates, and improves child health. When women are educated, it helps the overall well-being of the nations. Educating women significantly contributes to economic development by increasing the labor force and enhancing productivity. When the literacy rate of women is high, it directly influences GDP per capita.

Women's education plays a vital role in decreasing fertility rates, which has a significant impact on economic development. The education of women has a significant impact on child health and mortality rates. Educated mothers are more likely to seek personal care, adopt healthier practices, and access medical facilities, leading to improved health outcomes for their children. Investing in women's education fosters gender equality by empowering women to actively participate in economic and social aspects.

There are various policies that focus on women's education, but they are still remaining in the discussion phase. The recent educational policy NEP 2020 is a comprehensive framework that mainly emphasizes equitable, accessible, and quality education to break down systematic barriers to girls' education, improve retention and participation rates, and prepare women for active roles in sustainable and economic development in India. This policy recognized that educating women is not just a social priority it is an economic imperative. This comprehensive framework takes various initiatives, such as the Gender Inclusion Fund, inclusive and quality education, vocational education and skill development, multidisciplinary education, multiple entry and exit points in higher education, emphasis on gender inclusion and equity, and so on, to educate women and develop the nation. Because women's education and economic growth are deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing. As more women become educated and economically engaged, India has increased its skilled workforce, reduced poverty cycles, and accelerated economic development. Thus, investing in women's education is one of the most effective strategies for building a more prosperous and equitable society.

Overall, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 plays a significant role in promoting women education and empowerment in India. The policy focuses on holistic improvement of women education by providing equal opportunities.

1.6 Discussion:

1. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) includes various key provisions that directly or indirectly influence on women's education. With the aim of promoting equitable, accessible, and quality education for all, this policy recognizes the significance of women's education and their empowerment for a better future. So that this policy recommends various key strategies, such as a gender inclusion fund, eliminating gender gaps, gender-sensitive curricula, scholarships and financial assistance, special educational zones, and inclusive infrastructure for increasing the literacy rates of women and navigating the traditional systematic barriers.

2. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) considers the importance of women's empowerment through education. All kinds of development depend on quality education. Empowerment means to know the capability, status, and self-efficacy of life. Women's empowerment means promoting their self-worth, their ability to determine their choices, voices against the gender gap, etc. This happens only through education. Historically, women faced tremendous challenges to uplift their status, owing their own right. So that is the reason this policy is very significant, which made efforts to educate women and empower them. If this policy can touch the issues of women and is able to prescribe proper educational provisions, then women's empowerment is possible.

3. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) signifies the interconnection between women's education and economic development. In India half of the population is women; if women's education is neglected, there is no possibility of the nation's development. So, considering the importance and interconnection of women's education, this policy designed various strategies to educate women, and through providing quality and inclusive education, women are empowered and contribute to the society and the country.

1.7 Conclusion:

Women education has been recognized as a vital force in the socio-economic development and gender equality in India. Despite significant progress since independence, structural and cultural barriers continue to hinder women's access to educational opportunities. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers a comprehensive and transformative framework aimed at addressing these challenges through equitable, accessible, inclusivity, and gender sensitive provisions. To navigate the structural and cultural barriers Government should take the initiative from the grassroots level, avoid political influences, provide quality and inclusive education for all as same for rural and urban area, in remote area developed the access on technology, improve the recruitment and training procedure, provide targeted scholarships and financial aid should be expanded to ensure that girls from SEDGs can access quality education, establishing safe and inclusive educational environment can help to reduce dropout rates among girls, increasing the representation of women in leadership within educational institutions, integrating life skills, digital literacy and multiple discipline curriculum can helps to women become economically independent and confident decision makers. By effective implementing these strategies align with the NEP 2020, creates a paradigm shift towards India's education system with the goal of navigating the numerous obstacles of the educational area as well as other aspects like equity, access, and inclusion. If this comprehensive policy failed to tackling the traditional obstacles, will also be limited to revolutionizing women's education. The success of NEP 2020 depends heavily on effective implementation, continuous monitoring, and community participation which will be crucial to realizing its full potential. Overall, this policy holds great promise for transforming the educational landscape of women and advancing gender equality in India.

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Attitude of Parents toward Girls' Education in North Lakhimpur area of Assam

Saurav Bhaumik

ABSTRACT

The attitude of parents toward girls' education is a critical determinant in shaping the academic and social development of female students. Parental perceptions are influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, socio-economic, and historical factors that often reflect broader societal norms and values. The study is designed to investigate attitude of parents toward girls' education in North Lakhimpur area of Assam. The primary objective of the study is to find out the significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to gender, locality, economic condition and educational status. The descriptive survey method used in the study and 200 parents were selected through simple random sampling technique as a target population. A five point's attitude scale used to collect data. Findings of the study revealed that 83% parents have shown favorable attitude and 17% parents have shown unfavourable attitude towards girls' education. There is a significant difference in

attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to locality, economic condition and educational status but there is no significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to gender. According to mean value mothers, urban parents, wealthy parents and educated parents have a more favorable attitude towards girls' education as compared to fathers, rural parents, wealthy parents and uneducated parents respectively.

Keywords: *Attitude, girls' education, parents, academic and social development.*

1.0 Introduction:

Education is a basic need and a very effective weapon for advancement of the person as well as of the society. Education should not be determined by the gender of the child involved; every child should be given equal chance to education. That being said, there are a number of societies where girls are excluded from education because of cultural, economical and other factors. They are able to achieve only a fraction of these dreams, confining themselves to their roles as wives, workers, and caretakers while at the same time hindering economic development, and making themselves more susceptible to abuse as well as prejudice. Traditional education was just a process of passing information whereby children were seen as passive recipients. However, in the contemporary society filled with constant changes education is instrumental in changing peoples' lives as well as advocating for equality. Especially if it is talking about women's education, the key to democratic and progressive society must be mentioned. It plays the role of an adviser to the modernization and economic development towards empowering not only people but also society as a whole. However, current literacy level statistics all around the world reveal that the rate of literacy is still higher among men than among women in some areas. For instance, the average literacy rate in Assam 72.2 percent and the male literacy rate is 77.8 percent while the female literacy rate is 66.3 percent; hence the need for the government to enhance the literacy rate for girl child education. Education for girls does not only mean providing an opportunity to be educated as a right however it is necessary for the construction of a just society.

Girls' education entails the formal and informal education which enables the girls to acquire knowledge and skills as well as skills on how to transform their lives. This concerns the teaching of knowledge in both academic and social domains as well as personal and social emotional and practical skills. For any country to achieve its development goals, it is paramount that girl child education take equal footing with boy child education. Girls with an education give themselves a better and healthy

life, improve their productivity, be useful to their society, and be an instrument of change.

Attitude refers to a person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors toward something or someone. It refers to the manner in which people respond or even how they handle matters, events or even people or things. Parental attitude can be defined as the beliefs, emotions and actions that parents exhibit towards their children. Parents' attitude and perception towards girls' education has a great impact on their daughters. In many societies, liberal minded parents understand the role of education for the emancipation of girl child, independence and equal rights. They play a proactive role in the given show by supporting their daughters to go for further studies and struggle for their carriers. But in some places, culture and poverty slows the efforts to try to increase the education of female kids. This is because some parents may have to attend to other calls such as household chores or early marriage or failure to school due to lack of fees among other factors. The other factors influencing parental perceptions are ignorance, insecurity, and sex role stereotyping. The governments and non-governmental organizations always try to change these perceptions through raising awareness, financial support as well as safe school environments. When parents empower girl child education, they in fact empower their families as well as society as a whole. Lastly, developing ability to change the people's attitudes and making them understand the importance of education for every child, boy or girl is another way to promote the concept of gender equality and development.

1.0.1 Study Area

North Lakhimpur is a town and the administrative headquarters of the Lakhimpur district in the state of Assam, India. North Lakhimpur is situated in the northeastern part of Assam, near the borders with Arunachal Pradesh. It is located on the banks of the River Subansiri. This area is known for its scenic beauty, with lush green landscapes, tea gardens, and rivers.

1.0.2 Operational Terms Used

- **Attitude;** Attitude refers to a person's way of thinking or feeling about something or someone, often influencing their behavior towards that object or situation
- **Parents;** Parents refers to a person's mother and father or guardians who raise and care for them.
- **Girls' education;** Girls' education refers to the process of providing learning opportunities to girls and young women, ensuring they have access to knowledge, skills, and personal development.

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

1. To study about the attitude of parents toward girls' education.
2. To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to gender.
3. To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to locality
4. To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to economic condition.
5. To find out the significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to educational status.

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study:

1. There is no significant difference between mothers and fathers' attitude toward girls' education.
2. There is no significant difference between rural and urban parents' attitude toward girls' education.
3. There is no significant difference between poor and wealthy parents' attitude toward girls' education.
4. There is no significant difference between educated and uneducated parents' attitude toward girls' education.

1.3 Review Related Literature:

Ravichadra et al., (2021), conducted a study on parental attitude towards girls' education and found that parents have more understanding about the necessity of education and its impact on being a good citizen than the rural parents. They know that educated girls have more understanding about their rights and duties towards the nation which is not so in case of the uneducated girls. And also uneducated parents create problems in their own lives as well as for the society as a whole.

Devi (2020), conducted a study on parental attitude towards girls' education in hills area of Manipur and indicated that there is a significant difference in attitude of parents of different education level, income level and occupation towards education of girls.

Dr. Chingtham and Guite (2017), studied on parental attitude towards girl's education and found that education of parents highly influenced their attitude towards girl's education. Also, the economic background and occupational level influence their attitude towards girl's education. Therefore, education of the parents give positive attitude, cultural lag of the parents on the other hand give negative attitude towards girls education.

Reshma (2014), studied on attitude towards girl child education and found that parents of all caste have highly positive attitude towards the education of their girl child. Also, mothers have comparatively more favorable attitude towards the education of their girl child than father.

Das et al., (2022), conducted a study on attitude of parents toward girls' education and revealed that both the male and female parents have the positive feelings towards the girl's education. In rural areas mothers are more concerned about their girl's education than fathers. But in urban areas fathers are more concerned than the mothers towards their child's education.

Muduli (2024), conducted a study on parental attitude towards girls education – a study in bhubaneswar and revealed that almost all the educated parents want to educate their girls. Some educated and uneducated parents think that if the daughters are educated, the parents have to face problem to choose a suitable groom according to the qualification, financial problems fear of too much independent that they face dowry problem.

From the various studies related to parental attitude towards girls' education, it is clear that there are various factors that determine the level of parents' attitude towards girl child education some of which include education level, economic status, employment, and culture. In literate families, there are less prejudice towards education of daughters as they understand its importance in producing good citizens and diminishing gender discrimination.

However, in rural inhospitable settings or families that come from a lower class background, some parents' concerns are search for a good husband, financial obligations, and excessive freedom of daughters. Even though the perception towards girl education is changing positively, there are still barriers from the society and culture that need to be addressed time and again and appropriate policies, as well as support assistants and economic incentive to enhance girl education.

1.4 Methodology of the Study:

The present study is descriptive in nature and the investigator has selected descriptive survey method for study. A descriptive survey method involves collecting data in a structured and systematic manner from a sample in order to gain descriptive details of respondents and the target population in terms of their characteristics, behaviors or attitudes without having to alter and/or control variables or factors.

1.4.1 Population of the Study

Population of the present study consists of parents of girls in North Lakhimpur area of Assam. Population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or events who share a common characteristic, such as age sex, locality etc. it is the complete set

of elements (persons or objects) that possess some common characteristics defined by the sampling criteria established by the researcher.

1.4.2 Sample of the Study

Sample of the present study consists of 200 parents of girls in North Lakhimpur area of Assam and simple random sampling technique used to select target population. Simple random sampling technique is a sampling technique, where the researcher selects a group of subjects (a sample) for study from a larger group (a population each individual is chosen of being included in the sample). Simple random sampling technique is one of the sampling techniques in which each sample has an equal probability of being chosen.

1.4.3 Tool Used in the Study

The investigator constructed and developed an attitude scale for collecting data from target population. The scale was adopted the procedure based on Likert's five point's scale which consists five options i.e. strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree for respondent. The scale consisted total 35 statement, 25 out of them are positive statements and 10 are negative statements. For the positive statements, 5,4,3,2 and 1 points are given for SA, A, U, D and SD respectively and for the negative statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 points are given for SA, A, U, D and SD respectively. The minimum score on this scale is 30 and the maximum score is 150. Reliability and validity of the scale tested with the help of research expert and content expert.

1.4.4 Statistical Techniques Used in the Study

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- t-test
- Standard Error Deviation
- Percentage

1.4.5 Variable of the Study

- **Dependent variable:** Attitude of parents.
- **Independent variable:** Gender, locality, economic condition, and educational status of parents.

1.5 Analysis and Interpretation of the Data:

The analysis and computation along with interpretation have been placed objective cum hypothesis wise.

Objective 1; To study about the attitude of parents toward girls' education.

Table 1 : Showing attitude of parents toward girls' education in North Lakhimpur area of Assam.

Attitude	Unfavorable	Favorable
Score	30 - 102	103 - 175
No. of Parent	34	166
Percentage	17%	83%

Interpretation:

Table no. 1 shows that the majority (83%) of parents have shown favourable attitude towards girls' education and 17% of parents have shown unfavourable attitude towards girls' education. (Attitude scale of possesses minimum 30 scores and maximum 175 scores, therefore, the average score of the attitude scale was taken 102.5).

Objective 2; To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to gender.

Hypothesis 1; There is no significant difference between mothers and fathers' attitude toward girls' education.

Table No. 2 : Showing Mean scores, Standard Deviation, Difference of two means, Standard Error of differences, and t- value of attitude score of parents toward girls' education with respect to gender.

GenderN	Mean	SD	D	SED	t – value	Remark
Father 89	118.39	23.41	5.80	3.42	1.69	Not Significant
Mother 111	124.19	24.58				

Significance level at 0.01level is 2.364

Interpretation:

Table no. 2 shows that the t-value (1.69) is less than the table value. So $P > 0.01$ is not significant. It indicates that gender does not differ in parental attitude towards girls' education. So the formulated null hypothesis is accepted. It tells that there is no significant difference between fathers and mothers' attitudes toward girls' education. From the mean value, it is clear that mothers have a more favorable attitudes as compare to fathers toward girls' education.

Objective 3; To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls' education with respect to locality.

Hypothesis 2; There is no significant difference between rural and urban parents’ attitude toward girls’ education.

Table No. 3 : Showing Mean scores, Standard Deviation, Difference of two means, Standard Error of differences, and t- value of attitude score of parents toward girls’ education with respect to locality.

Locality	N	Mean	SD	D	SED	t – value	Remark
Rural	97	116.37	25.48	9.95	3.34	2.97	Significant
Urban	103	126.32	21.71				

Significance level at 0.01level is 2.364

Interpretation:

Table no. 3 shows that the t-value (2.97) is greater than the table value. So $P>0.01$ is significant. It indicates that gender is differ in parental attitude towards girls’ education. So the formulated null hypothesis is rejected. It tells that there is a significant difference between rural and urban parents’ attitudes toward girls’ education. From the mean value, it is clear that urban parents have a more favorable attitudes as compare to rural parents toward girls’ education.

Objective 4; To find out significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls’ education with respect to economic condition.

Hypothesis 3; There is no significant difference between poor and wealthy parents’ attitude toward girls’ education.

Table No. 4 : Showing Mean scores, Standard Deviation, Difference of two means, Standard Error of differences, and t- value of attitude score of parents toward girls’ education with respect to economic condition.

Economic Condition	N	Mean	SD	D	SED	t – value	Remark
Poor	104	116.96	24.64	9.44	3.35	2.82	Significant
Wealthy	96	126.41	22.56				

Significance level at 0.01level is 2.364

Interpretation:

Table no. 4 shows that the t-value (2.82) is greater than the table value. So $P>0.01$

is significant. It indicates that parental attitudes toward girls’ education are different based on their economic condition. So the formulated null hypothesis is rejected. It tells that there is a significant difference between poor parents and wealthy parents’ attitudes toward girls’ education. From the mean value, it is clear that wealthy parents have a more favorable attitudes as compare to poor parents toward girls’ education.

Objective 5; To find out the significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls’ education with respect to educational status.

Hypothesis 4; There is no significant difference between educated and uneducated parents’ attitude toward girls’ education.

Table No. 5; Showing Mean scores, Standard Deviation, Difference of two means, Standard Error of differences, and t- value of attitude score of parents toward girls’ education with respect to educational status

Education	N	Mean	SD	D	SED	t – value	Remark
Educated	87	126.11	21.95	8.18	3.39	2.40	Significant
Uneducated	113	117.94	25.11				

Significance level at 0.01level is 2.364

Interpretation:

Table no. 5 shows that the t-value (2.40) is greater than the table value. So $P>0.01$ is significant. It indicates that parental attitudes toward girls’ education are different based on their education. So the formulated null hypothesis is rejected. It tells that there is a significant difference between educated parents and uneducated parents’ attitudes toward girls’ education. From the mean value, it is clear that educated parents have a more favorable attitudes as compare to uneducated parents toward girls’ education.

1.6 Conclusion:

From the analysis and discussion, it is concluded that 83% parents have shown favorable attitude and 17% parents have shown unfavourable attitude towards girls’ education. There is a significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls’ education with respect to locality, economic condition and educational status but the is no significant difference in attitude of parents toward girls’ education with respect to gender. According to mean value mothers, urban parents, wealthy parents and educated parents have a more favorable attitude towards girls’ education as compared to fathers, rural parents, wealthy parents and uneducated parents respectively.

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Role of Media to Eradicate Gender Biasness

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Jenny Ekka
Dr. Monika Sharma

ABSTRACT

Gender bias remains one of the most deep-rooted social issues across the world, perpetuating inequality and discrimination in various spheres of life including education, employment, politics, and domestic settings. This paper tried to understand the concept of gender discrimination, also explores the transformative role of media in challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality. Through the lens of print, electronic, and digital media, the study analyses how narratives are constructed and disseminated to influence public perception and policy. It evaluates both the positive contributions and the challenges the media faces in addressing gender issues. The paper concludes that while media has the potential to serve as a catalyst for social change, this potential can only be realized through conscious, responsible, and inclusive media practices.

Keywords: *Equality, Gender, Gender Discrimination, Role of Media.*

1.0 Introduction:

In present time, there has been a lot of discussion about how the media shapes attitudes toward gender equality (**Küçük°en, 2016**). As media platforms are widely used and audiences around the world are becoming more interconnected, it is hard to deny the influence of media on society beliefs regarding gender roles and equality (**Wood, 1994**). Conventional gender standards are shaped and either challenged or reinforced by the media in all of its varied forms, including print, digital, social media, and television. The impact of the media on gender equality is complex and multifaceted.

The media is the most prevalent and potent of the many factors influencing our perceptions of men and women (**Santonico et al., 2023**). The media constantly weaves its messages into our consciousness as we go about our daily lives. Images of the sexes are conveyed through the media, and many of them reinforce constricting, unrealistic, and stereotypical ideas (**Guilbeault et al., 2024**). The representation of gender in the media is divided into three themes. The first is the underrepresentation of women, which perpetuates the myth that men are the norm and that women are invisible or inconsequential. Second, stereotypical depictions of men and women reinforce and reflect socially acceptable gender stereotypes. Third, representations of male-female relationships legitimize violence against women and place an emphasis on conventional roles.

Stereotypes about men and women are still prevalent in the media, which restricts our understanding of what is possible for people. Men are typically shown as powerful, active, daring, sexually aggressive, and mainly detached from interpersonal connections. Similarly, representations of women as sex objects—typically young, slender, attractive, passive, reliant, and frequently stupid and incompetent—are in line with cultural concepts of gender. The main focus of female characters' energy is on maintaining their appearance and caring for their houses and people. Our perceptions of ourselves and what we consider to be normal and desirable for men and women may be distorted by the ways that the media, which permeates every aspect of our lives, misrepresents genders.

- **Sex:** The biological traits that differentiate the physical attributes of men and women are referred to here. The normal hormone levels, genetic makeup, and reproductive organs of men and women differ significantly. These biological traits of males and females are consistent throughout all civilizations and societies. In simple terms, sex refers to the universal and birth-determined biological distinctions between men and women. The physical distinction between the biological male and female is referred to as “sex.”

- **Gender:** Gender is a people's issue, not only a woman's concern. In every society, gender is a social construct that influences men's and women's attitudes,

duties, obligations, and behavioral patterns (**Collins, 2011**). It refers to the duties and obligations that society has established for both men and women. The idea of gender encompasses acquired gender roles and expectations regarding the traits, skills, and probable conduct of both men and women. The idea of gender is created by culture and individuals rather than being mostly determined by nature. This indicates that gender views are ever-changing and can vary greatly throughout cultures, nations, and generations (Liao, 2023). Within a certain environment, gender establishes what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man. For instance, in many communities, men are under more pressure to earn a living in order to support the family, while women are more likely to be expected to take care of the home and the children. Men are perceived as strong, while women are perceived as delicate and kind.

Therefore, gender can be defined as a term that encompasses the roles, actions, expectations, and ideals associated with men and women in society. Given that culture and the living society influence how people perceive and act in relation to gender identity, gender is regarded as a social and cultural construct rather than just a biological description.

The emergence of the concept gender:

Psychoanalyst Robert Stoller supervised the development of the term “gender” in the 1950s and 1960s. But in the early 1970s, British sociologist Ann Oakley popularized it in feminist studies by using the notion of gender in her book to differentiate between “biological characteristics (sex)” and “socio-cultural characteristics.” In order to examine the conflict between culture and nature in the area of sexuality and highlight the fact that sex is a social construct, gender was first developed as a counterpoint to sex (**Ward & Grower, 2020**).

Gender, often rooted in culture, behavior, and identity, is shaped significantly by societal norms. The media plays a key role in spreading stereotypes, linking specific traits to masculinity and femininity. Boys are frequently depicted as strong and unemotional, while girls are shown as fragile and emotionally driven (**Puchner et al., 2015**). Such portrayals infuse various forms of media, including advertisements, films, TV shows, and even children’s programming. For instance, the association of blue with boys and pink with girls is a result of media-driven cultural conditioning, setting rigid ideas about gender roles (**Pike & Jennings, 2005**).

Additionally, women are often represented in the media as reliant on men for protection, reinforcing dynamics of domination and dependence. This pattern is evident in Bollywood item songs, popular TV serials, and movies, which frequently objectify women, reducing them to tools for male pleasure. Similarly, advertisements for products like cars or clothing often influence feminine sexuality to drive consumerism. These

representations not only spread gender discrimination but also strengthen harmful societal norms **(Peter & Valkenburg, 2007)**.

Media holds immense power in shaping public perception and influencing societal behavior **(Guo, 2022)**. While it has historically contributed to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes—portraying men as emotionally detached and women as dependent and objectified—it also has the potential to challenge and transform these narratives. The purpose of this research is to critically examine the dual role of media: how it perpetuates gender bias and how it can serve as a transformative tool to dismantle such biases. This study seeks to explore actionable strategies through which media can promote gender equity, encourage progressive role models, and create inclusive representations that reflect the evolving realities of both women and men.

1.1 Objectives:

- To understand gender discrimination as a barrier to equality and development and its various sectors.
- To explore the role of media as a tool for advocacy and social change regarding gender equality.
- To suggest measures for enhancing the media's contribution to the eradication of gender bias.

1.2 Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative approach supported by content analysis of selected newspapers, articles, research papers, and social media platforms to understand gender portrayals

1.3 Discussion:

Understanding Gender Discrimination: A Barrier to Equality and Development

Discrimination is defined literally as treating someone unfairly because of their sex, race, or other characteristics. It is regarded as a barrier to achieving the goals of peace, equality, and development **(Ward & Grower, 2020)**. Discrimination is acknowledged globally as a form of inequality and a problem for women. It has an impact on women's ability to completely and freely engage in society, which has a negative psychological effect. The majority of women, who represent nearly half of the world's population, continue to face direct or indirect discrimination at various stages of their lives **(Peter & Valkenburg, 2007)**. When people are treated differently based on their sex, this is known as gender discrimination. Abuse or discrimination against people of the other sex: unfair treatment of an individual or group because of

prejudice, male chauvinism, or actions that show a belief in men’s superiority over women. A common civil rights violation is discrimination on the basis of sex or gender (Guo, 2022). Gender-based discrimination can take many different forms, including as unequal remuneration for women doing the same occupations as men, sexual harassment, and discrimination during pregnancy.

Gender Discrimination Related to Men and Women

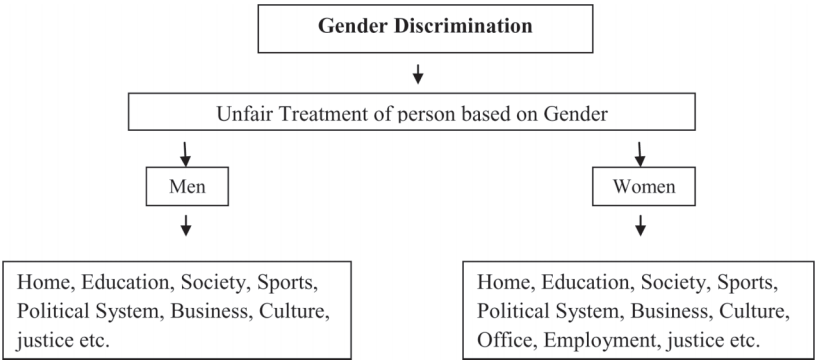


Fig. 1: Gender Discrimination Related to Men and Women

Various Sectors of Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination manifests across multiple sectors, affecting women’s access to opportunities, resources, and rights. It is deeply embedded in social, economic, political, and cultural structures, creating systemic barriers that hinder equality. This section highlights how gender bias operates in various domains of life.

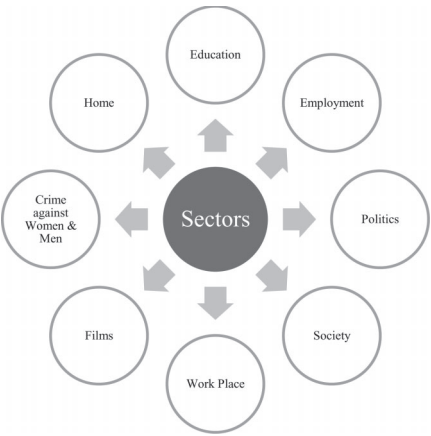


Fig. 2: Sectors of Gender Discrimination

- **Education:** An ongoing problem in the education sector, gender discrimination affects girls' and women's educational and life opportunities by resulting in unequal access, participation, and outcomes. Parents have a negative attitude, the community does not support girls' education, and parents are not allowed to participate in educational programs. It is a reflection of gender discrimination, which is unacquirable.

- **Work place:** Like men, women play an important role in our society. These days, women are self-sufficient in all fields, whether they are public, private, or another. Despite being autonomous and highly educated, women in today's world do not receive the positions they are entitled to. She is harassed in this field for heavy workload, little pay, harassment from superiors, abuse, burning, and remarks on caste, creed, sex, religion, and other things. Discrimination based on gender also promotes harassment and violence in the workplace.

- **Home:** India is a patriarchal country where women are frequently pressured to fulfill traditional care giving and household responsibilities, which restricts their ability to participate in public life. Women's independence and ability to make decisions in the home may be restricted by traditional gender norms. The majority of unpaid care labor, such as childcare and housework, falls on women, which restricts their time and prospects. One major instance of gender-based discrimination is domestic violence, which disproportionately affects women.

- **Politics:** India is a traditionally patriarchal society where women often face societal pressure to conform to traditional roles of homemaking and care giving, which limits their participation in public life, including politics.

- **Films:** Studies and reports show that the film industry's gender discrimination takes the form of prejudiced on-screen representations of women, unequal compensation, and insufficient of women in important roles. Actresses are compelled to do new things in the film industry in order to make money. Glamour, shots, scenes, short clothing, and dancing are becoming necessities for society, particularly for the younger generation.

- **Crimes against women and men:** In India's modern society, which is rapidly developing, there are a number of causes of sexual and moral abuse that are frequently brought to light by the media. Crime is sensitive news for the media. The dower system, domestic violence (both male and female), abuse, rape, trafficking of men and women, murder, wage, and sexual harassment all occur with men and women, but the majority of victims are women.

Role of Media in Addressing Gender Discrimination

The media is a reflection of society, and its reports reflect events in society. The media plays a complex and vital role in eliminating gender discrimination and promoting

gender equality. The media plays a major role in influencing public opinion, dispelling damaging stereotypes, and promoting social and political change.

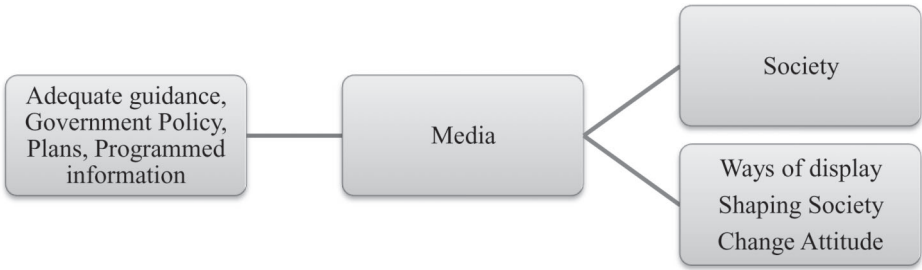


Fig.3: Role of Media

- **Representation:** By showcasing a range of gender identities and experiences, the media can contribute to the understanding of gender equality concerns. This promotes empathy and challenges harmful prejudices by making people feel heard and seen.
- **Narratives:** By using storytelling to humanize marginalized people and increase awareness of gender-based discrimination, the media may help build a society that is more equitable and inclusive.
- **Advocacy:** The media can advocate for change and voice opposition to unfavorable policies by using its platforms. The #Me-too movement, for instance, has raised awareness of sexual harassment and assault through media attention, enabling survivors to share their experiences and sparking conversations about consent and sexual violence.
- **Influence on Policies:** By highlighting the significance of gender equality and opposing discriminatory practices, such as advocating for equal representation in positions of decision-making, equal pay for equal work, and the abolition of gender-based violence, the media can have an impact on policy changes. In many countries around the world, women’s opinions are often disregarded, and they are not taught how to ask questions or engage in public dialogues. Many women remain unaware of their basic rights to education, property, retirement, and more, which hinders their ability to challenge existing norms and stereotypes. This makes it difficult to achieve the inclusive societies we aim for through the global development agenda. Access to information empowers women to demand their rights and make better decisions. As such, it is important to support the media sector in creating content that aims to change gender stereotypes and create equality-promoting self-regulation laws, such as those pertaining to decision-making roles.

- **Responsibility:** Sensationalism should be avoided by the media in favor of honest and balanced reporting that fairly represents all genders and refrains from reinforcing negative stereotypes. By upholding ethical norms including seeking and presenting the truth, minimizing harm, operating independently, and being accountable and transparent, journalists and media organizations have a clear duty to the public interest.

- **Oppose gender-based violence:** Men and women are both subjected to gender discrimination. Discrimination and rape laws are associated with men, while gender-based violence is associated with women. The media is needed in this situation to support both men and women who are victims. The media should make an effort to report the truth.

- **Collaboration:** Avoid interfering for personal gain. Print and mass electronic media should both convey the same message, avoiding misunderstandings regarding one piece of evidence pertaining to gender discrimination against both men and women. First and foremost, media should adhere to their policies before sharing personal information.

- **Sensitiveness about cases:** Discrimination against women and men based on their sex. Both of these issues should be highlighted by the media. When it comes to depicting women, the media has been forced to become more responsible and gender sensitive, which has helped to significantly change societal attitudes. For this reason, a gender-friendly media policy must be developed.

- **Providing equal value:** In a culture where men predominate, the media can foster an equal perception of society. The media must become more socially conscious and dedicated to its duties, which include promoting ideals that prevent gender discrimination against both men and women.

- **Control before publishing:** In democracy everyone is free to express their opinions. However, no one should be permitted to have personal intentions. All news that encourages gender discrimination against both men and women should be prohibited. The advertisements should be reviewed by sensor board committees prior to being shown on television, in newspapers, or in magazines. Because media is regarded as the forth pillar of democracy.

- **Support to curriculum:** The curriculum framework for younger generation can be changed with the help of the media. A variety of opinions regarding politics, democracy, plans, and processors can be acquired through the media. If people want something, they can change. It is necessary to provide appropriate support for the prohibition on gender discrimination in education. In India, electronic media—especially television—has emerged as the most significant mass communication channels.

- **Verified information:** Verified facts: Media has to provide reliable information, news, reports, advertisements, and movies for the benefit of people. The media has a major influence on how society views things, thinks, acts, and behaves.

Measures for enhancing the media's contribution

To enhance the media's contribution to eradicating gender bias, several strategic measures must be adopted.

- Promote gender-sensitive reporting by avoiding stereotypes and ensuring balanced representation.
- Conduct training programs for media professionals on gender awareness and ethical journalism.
- Ensure greater participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in media organizations.
- Enforce regulatory guidelines that penalize discriminatory content and reward inclusive narratives.
- Support collaborative campaigns between media, NGOs, and academic institutions to raise awareness about gender equality.
- Encourage media literacy among the public to critically analyze and question gender-biased content.

All castes and religions must be treated equally in democratic societies, as this is a natural requirement. Discrimination against women occurs in many facets of society. The constitution itself established numerous laws to address gender discrimination. It affects both males and women. The media should be crucial in bringing attention to the actual state of laws against rape, domestic abuse, harassment, sex-based practices, etc. by working with other media outlets and raising public awareness (**Ward & Grower, 2020**). Human rights will then be freely enjoyed by both men and women without hindrance. The media has the power to promote confidence and ambition in girls and women by showcasing positive role models in both men and women. It can also encourage pressure for social change and support campaigns and movements that advocate gender equality. The media can encourage viewers to participate and engage by facilitating communication and discussion about gender equality issues. By providing images targeted at the intended societal change and providing fair and comprehensive media coverage, the media can be seen as a constructive agent in advancing gender equality (**Santonniccolo et al., 2023**).

1.4 Conclusion:

Media, as a powerful agent of socialization, plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes and norms related to gender. While it has historically contributed to the reinforcement

of gender stereotypes, its evolving role in recent decades presents immense potential to combat gender bias. The study finds that when media adopts inclusive, balanced, and gender-sensitive practices, it not only raises awareness but also influences policy-making and social behavior. However, to make a sustained impact, media institutions must undergo structural reforms, encourage diversity in newsroom leadership, and promote ethical journalism that upholds gender equity. A collaborative effort between media, civil society, and policy-makers is essential to dismantle entrenched biases and create a more equitable society.

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Impact of Government schemes on Girls' education in Assam: An analysis of "Pragyan Bharati Scheme"

Amir Ali

ABSTRACT

This investigation looks at how the Pragyan Bharati Scheme has influenced women's education in Assam. It uses documentary and qualitative methodologies to compare enrollment before and after the initiative. According to the survey, the female student's average enrollment before and after the Pragyan Bharati Scheme is 49.1% (2017-20) and 51.87% (2020-22) at the senior secondary level. But at the undergraduate level, the average is 52.1% (2017-20) and 51.86% (2020-22). In 2022-23 the growth rate at undergraduate level is high, 1.09%. According to the study's findings, the Pragyan Bharati Scheme is a promising example of women's empowerment and education in Assam.

Keywords: *Women education, The Pragyan Bharati Scheme, Undergraduate education in Assam*

1.0 Introduction:

Without women's empowerment, a nation cannot progress (Nandi et al.,2024). Merely by utilizing all of its human resources can a nation progress. It won't be possible unless women are given equal opportunity in all sphere of social life. Therefore, women's empowerment is essential to attaining sustainable development which was determined by 4th (SDG) out 17 goals came in 2015. Education was the route to achieve the goals. While women encounter several significance challenges, the magical word "Education" may overcome almost all (Crook & Udogu, 2006). Education is one of the importance weapons for the development of a nation. During the British colonial era, Swami Vivekananda, Raja Rammohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made resolute effort to empower women in India (Bandyopadhyay, 2020). Indian constitutional articles 14-18 and 21 (A) which affirms the right to equality regardless of gender, caste, creed or other characteristics is one of numerous provisions pertaining to the general protection of women's rights and article 21(A) provide guarantees the fundamental right to primary education ages 6-14 that were added after independence (Basu, 2005). However, inequalities remain, particularly among the underprivileged people and in rural locations (Choudhury,2023). Like other Indian states, Assam continues to be making an intentional attempt to improve education for women. The economic factors that prevent girls from attending and staying at school or college are being addressed by a numbers of government initiatives. The Pragyan Bharati Scheme (PBS) shall be the main subject in this study. It is the most well-known and innovative initiative for female students in Assam, which is run under the department of Women development and social welfare (Govt. of Assam,2024).

1.1 Pragyan Bharati Scheme:

The Pragyan Bharati Scheme was launched, Assam in 2020 by the Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sharma name on Dr. Banikanta Kakati merit award. Dr. Banikanta Kakati was an intellectual figure and scholar from Assam (The sentinel,2024). Under this scheme the main goal is helping eligible Assamese students by providing scooters to those who do extremely well in the Higher Secondary (HS) final exam conducted by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC). In the first phase it was limited to females who obtained a first division, the scheme was later expanded and included boys with scores of at least 78% and girls with scores of at least 60%. The initiative aims to improve academic performance, foster competitiveness and motivate mobility for students pursuing higher education.

2.0 Review of related studies:

Sharma & Daimary (2024) conducted a study to find-out the gender disparity

in enrolment in higher education: Trend analysis. The result of their study concluded that, more women than males are enrolled in the art, science and commerce as well as medical. Males are likely than females had been enrolled in the Engineering, Technology, Management, Law and computer programs.

Nandi et al. (2024) conducted a study on Kanyashree Prakalpa as a catalyzer for development of women's education in west Bengal, India. Main objective of the study to find out the influence of Kanyashree Prakalpa for female students' enrolment at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. The result of the study showed that, at the undergraduate level 42.78% in 2010-2011 to 44.27% in 2012-13, after implemented increased 45.78% in 2014 to 51.91% in 2021-22 and at post-graduate level 43.94% to 53.85%, after implemented reaching as high as 59.04% in 2019-2020.

Das & Halder (2022) studied and find-out that, the Kanyashree Prakalpa significantly improved the social status, empowerment and educational opportunities of teenage girls in west Bengal.

Boruah (2021) have been done a study on status of women and education: special reference in Assam context. Main goal of the study to determine women's standing and involvement in education in the context of Assam. The result of the study revealed that, numbers of governmental incentives are being implemented in Assam, India, to enhance the education of women. Under the 'Pragyan Bharati scheme' the Assam state government gives scooters to deserving female students who receive a first division in their higher secondary exams. The scheme, which would cost Rs. 144.30 crore and free admission policy, intends to increase girls' self-esteem and motivate them to continue their education. However, the only way to increase women's involvement in the education sector is through governmental incentives. In order to achieve gender equality in India, it is imperative to raise awareness regarding girls' education. Education has grown significantly as a result of the state's funding efforts, with the goal of creating a high-quality system in which men and women engage equally.

3.0 Objectives of the study:

1. To study and find-out the female students' enrolment at senior secondary level before and after The Pragyan Bharati Scheme.
2. To study and find-out the female students' enrolment at undergraduate level before and after The Pragyan Bharati Scheme.

4.0 Research methodology:

The nature of this investigation is entirely qualitative. The study has used a documentary analysis technique. The meticulous process of collecting and assessing both textual and electronic materials is known as documentary analysis (Bowen,2009).

For the current study data was gathered from a variety of sources, including Assam govt. report, newspaper, websites, research papers, UDISE plus and AISHE report.

5.0 Data presentation and analysis:

5.1 To study and find-out the female students' enrolment at senior secondary level before and after The Pragyan Bharati scheme.

Table:1 Female students’ enrolment at senior secondary level before and after PBS, Assam.

Year	Total enrolment	Male students	Female students	% of female	Growth rate
2017-18	425966	217470	208496	48.95	
2018-19	420787	216046	204741	48.66	-0.29
2019-20	420657	211670	208987	49.68	1.02
2020-21	545752	264216	281536	51.59	2.93
2021-22	497610	238885	258725	51.99	0.40
2022-23	497692	238817	258875	52.02	0.03

Source: UDISE+ Govt. of India report (2018-19 to 2023-24)

Table 1 shows the enrolment of female students at the senior secondary level prior and after commencement of the Pragyan Bharati Scheme is based on Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report from the ministry of education Govt. India. In the 2018-19 academic year, 204741female students made up 48.66% of the total enrolment of 420787. In 2020-21, the percentage of female students increased 51.59%, with a 2.93 growth rate compared to the previous year. In 2021-22, female students accounted for 51.99% of total enrolment, with a 0.40% raise over the previous year. By the beginning of school 2023-24, the ratio of female students continued to climb 52.02%, up 0.03% over the previous year. The data shows changes in the percentage of female students' enrolment at senior secondary level throughout a four-year period, with varied growth rates each year.

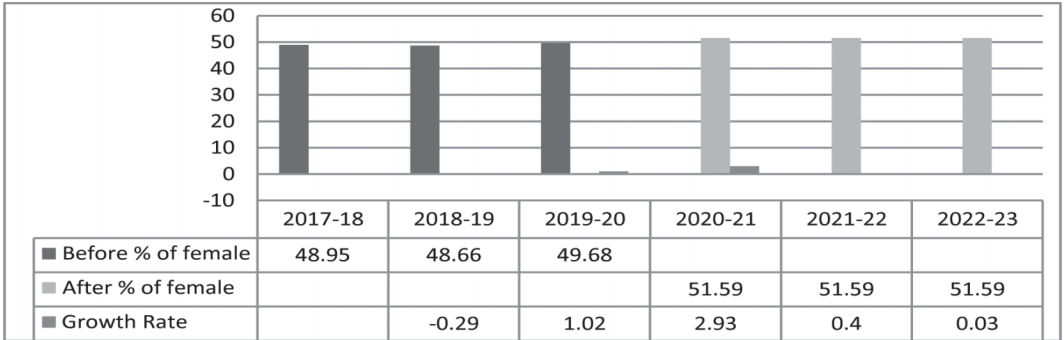


Figure:1 Histogram

Figure 1 shows that the increasing order of percentage of female students' enrolment at senior secondary level in Assam from 2017 to 2023, based on UDISE+ report Ministry of Education Govt. of India.

5.2 To study and find-out the female students' enrolment at undergraduate level before and after The Pragyan Bharati Scheme.

Table:2 Female students' enrolment at undergraduate level before and after PBS, Assam

Year	Total enrolment	Male students	Female students	% of female	Growth rate
2017-18	499098	240131	258967	51.89	
2018-19	521569	251389	270180	51.80	-0.09
2019-20	474233	224775	249458	52.60	0.80
2020-21	456815	219765	237050	51.89	-0.71
2021-22	492119	239639	252480	51.30	-0.59
2022-23	412717	196493	216224	52.39	1.09

Source: AISHE report (2018-19-2022-23)

Table 2 above shows the number of female undergraduate students enrolled before and after the introduction of Pragyan Bharati Scheme, according to data from the All-India Survey on Higher Education published by the Indian government's Ministry of human resource development now (Ministry of Education). The overall number of female students increased gradually between 2017-18 and 2022-23, with a visible change in 2022-23 is 52.39% and growth rate is 1.09. Although it varies, the growth rate- which is the yearly percentage change-generally shows an increasing tendency. Particularly, the percentage of female students increased by a noteworthy 1.09% between 20022-23, when the growth rate was highest. All things considered, the data points to a growing tendency over time toward more evenly distributed gender representation among all students.

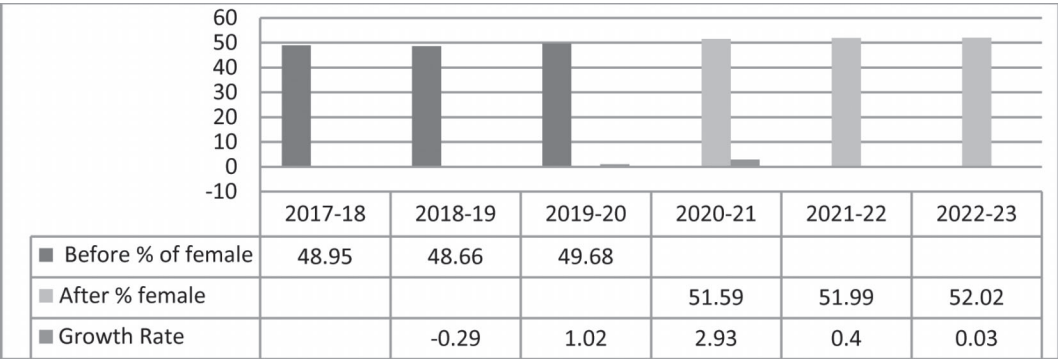


Figure:2 Histogram

Figure 2 shows that the increasing order of percentage of female students' enrolment at undergraduate level in Assam from 2017 to 2023, based on AISHE report Ministry of Education Govt. of India.

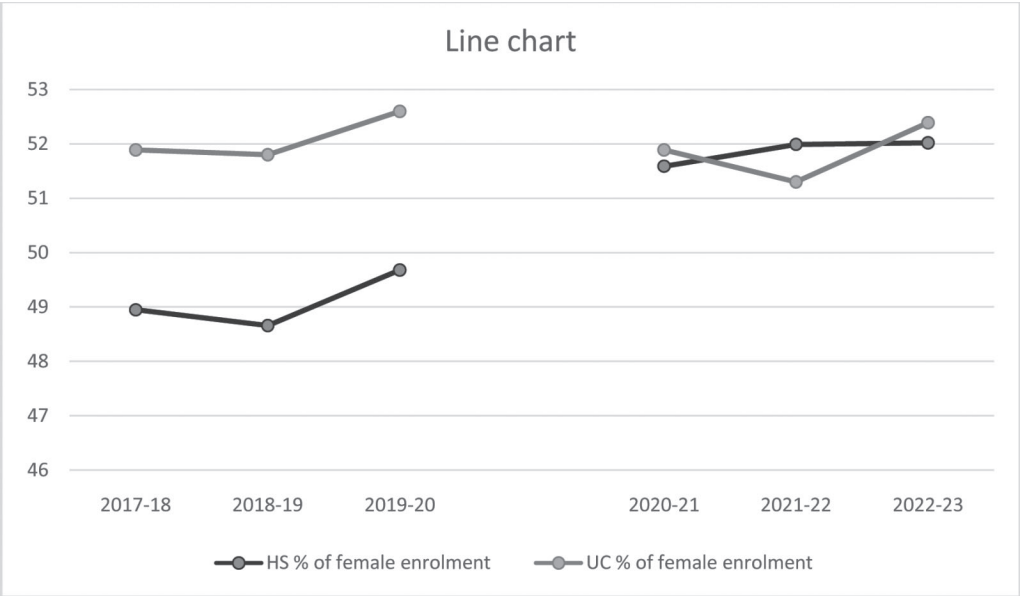


Figure 3 Comparison between enrolments of female students at the HS and UC level pre-and post-implementation of Pragyani Bharati Scheme.

6.0 Result of the study:

Following the introduction of the Pragyan Bharati Scheme, there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of female senior secondary and undergraduate students' enrolment. Prior to the adoption, within 2017-18 and 2018-19, the percentage of female enrolled was between 48% to 49% at Senior secondary level and 51% to 52 % at undergraduate level. After the implementation of scheme this proportion grew gradually, reaching between 52% to 52.02% (2020-2023) at senior secondary level and between 52% to 52.39% (2020-2023) at undergraduate level in Assam.

7.0 Discussion:

During the introduction of the Pragyan Bharati Scheme, there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of female senior secondary students, which provides strong proof of the scheme's beneficial effects on gender inclusion in education. The data shows a notable change from a rather steady enrolment rate of about 48.95% to 49.68% before to 2020. After implementation, the PBS the percentage of female students enrolled increased steadily and noticeably in the following years, reaching 52.02% and average growth rate was 1.12. by 2022-23 at the senior secondary level. But in the undergraduate level not fruitful impact by the PBS, according to the AISHE report, ministry of education Govt. of India. Before implementation average percentage of female students' enrolment is 52.1(2017-18) and after is 51.86(2022-23). However, the female student's enrolment was gradually increased prior to post implementation. This sequence of events implies that the Pragyan Bharati Scheme has successfully helped to remove obstacles that would have prevented women from pursuing higher education.

It is clear that the scheme has been successful in creating a more gender-inclusive learning environment, highlighting its contribution to female students are empowered and encouraged to seek undergraduate degrees. Nevertheless, more investigation might be necessary to examine the precise processes and elements that have contributed towards this constructive change as well as to evaluate the efforts' long-term viability and wider social ramifications.

8.0 Conclusion:

Finally, Pragyan Bharati Scheme's effort to help women in the state of Assam advance our education. several barriers that keep women from going to senior secondary school and college were addressed by PBS, which has shown to be an effective change agent. By providing women with the information and abilities needed for both individual and social. Thus, the initiative has not only enhanced their access to better educational opportunities but also assisted in ending the poverty cycle. Pragyan Bharati Scheme is a remarkable example of women's education and empowerment in Assam.

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ISSN : 2394-0662

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