

# Trends and Patterns of Gender Disparities in Education and Employment in Assam.

## Abstract:

Inclusive growth and social justice are essential determinants that depend on gender equality in education and employment, especially in socio-economically vulnerable regions like Assam (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 2018). This paper investigates the trends and patterns of gender inequality in education and employment in Assam which is based on the secondary data that include the Census of India, PLFS, NFHS and government reports. The discussion targets three main areas, namely, educational attainment, employment participation, and structural determinants of gender inequality. The results indicate that despite significant gains in female literacy and enrolment in primary schools, there are still unequal outcomes at secondary and tertiary education because of socio-cultural restrictions, infrastructural limitations, and economic considerations (Sharma, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2022). The participation of female labour force in the labour market is still much lower compared to that of males, and women are mostly involved in informal and low-paying jobs (Boruah & Das, 2022; Roy and Barua, 2022). The paper also finds a significant gap between educational progress and labour market performance, which is fuelled by patriarchal values, scarce career prospects, and institutional constraints (Kabeer, 1999). The article presents the argument that gender differences in education and employment are combined and based on structural inequalities. It highlights the importance of combined policy response in terms of educational retention, skills building, labour market inclusion, and gender-sensitive governance. The paper finds that gender equality in Assam should be pursued through long-term institutional mobilization and comprehensive development.

**Keywords:** Gender disparity; Education; Employment; Assam; Labour force participation; Inequality

## 1. Introduction:

The concept of gender equality has traditionally been considered as a pillar of social development, economic growth, and democracy (Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2014). Globally, the nature of inequality between men and women in terms of educational opportunities, workplaces, and access to economic resources still affect inequality patterns, especially in developing countries, where institutional constraints (poverty, socio-cultural values, poor infrastructure, and lack of institutional support) contribute to gender inequalities (Kabeer, 1999; UNDP, 2018). Even though India has made significant advances in both educational growth and women empowerment programs, the country remains characterized by gender disparities in various socio-economic indicators (Desai and Jain, 2019). Domestically, the differences between regions are sharp, and such states as Assam pose their own unique challenges and opportunities to study the dynamics of gender inequality (Nayak & Mahanta, 2015).

The socio-economic profile of Assam is defined by rural majority population, ethnic diversity, environmental susceptibility, like frequent floods, and uneven development across districts, which all influence access to education and participation in the labour markets

42 (Government of Assam, 2025). Assam historically had a large number of women contributing  
43 to the household and subsistence economies through agriculture, handloom production and  
44 informal sector activities. Nevertheless, most of this contribution is not reflected or not well  
45 reflected in official employment data, which leads to the incomplete evaluation of the  
46 economic activity of women (Borah, 2018). Therefore, gender inequalities in education and  
47 labour are associated not only with differences in access but also with additional structural  
48 inequalities embedded in social, economic, and institutional organization.

49 Education is generally considered to be a major factor in determining the employment,  
50 acquisition of skills, and socio-economic mobility. The greater the education, the better the  
51 labour market and earning capacity (Kingdon, 2007). However, the connection between  
52 education and a job is not always linear especially among women. In most situations, as  
53 female educational attainment increases, workforce participation does not correspondingly  
54 rise because of the entrenched gender norms, division of labour, and caregiving (Boruah &  
55 Das, 2022). In various Indian states, such as Assam, this paradox can be observed, with the  
56 female literacy rates increasing significantly, yet the percentage of female labour force  
57 participation in the country is quite low (Roy and Barua, 2022).

58 An emerging literature indicates that the relationship between gender inequality in education  
59 and employment is a phenomenon that is linked by culture, labour market, institutions, and  
60 policy environments (Kabeer, 1999; Sharma, 2020). These interlinkages are critical to  
61 understanding effective and context-specific interventions to be applied in minimizing gender  
62 inequality. In this regard, an analytical study on Assam is required to do in-depth analysis to  
63 establish trends, patterns and produce policy-relevant information on the structural aspects of  
64 gender gaps in education and employment.

## 65 **2. Conceptual Framework:**

66 The theoretical framework of the paper is based on the fact that gender differences in  
67 education and employment are multidimensional processes that are influenced by a  
68 combination of structural, socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. Gender  
69 disparity: the lack of equality in access to opportunities, resources and outcomes between  
70 men and women in all sectors of life especially in the fields of education and labour markets  
71 (Kabeer, 1999). Education is commonly considered as a very important type of human capital  
72 in the development theory as it improves skills, productivity and opportunities of finding jobs  
73 (Becker, 1993). Nevertheless, feminist and structural approaches believe that acquiring  
74 education is not enough to achieve fair employment results because labour markets tend to be  
75 gender-biased, discriminatory, and institutionalized (Sen, 1999).

76 Gender differences in education and employment in the case of Assam can be understood as  
77 processes instead of separate problems. The access and attainment of education affect the  
78 employability of women, the level of skills, and the mobility within the occupation, and the  
79 job can determine whether to continue education and acquire new skills. Empirical data  
80 reveal that female literacy and survey enrolment in Assam is the area that has improved, but  
81 the participation of women in the labour force is relatively low, which suggests that the  
82 contribution of education to economic inclusion is weak (Boruah and Das, 2022; Roy and  
83 Barua, 2022). This association implies that educational gains are translated into employment  
84 outcomes through the intermediary of labour market arrangements, access to decent  
85 employment, and social anticipations about gender roles.

86 The model thus places the gender gaps in education (literacy, enrolment, retention, higher  
87 education participation) as the two major explanatory variables affecting employment  
88 outcomes (labour force participation, occupational distribution, wage levels), though both are  
89 also shaped by the broader contextual determinants of socio-economic status, rural–urban  
90 location, cultural norms, infrastructure, and policy environments (UNDP, 2018; Sharma, With  
91 the combination of these dimensions, the conceptual framework offers an integrated  
92 analytical view of the interaction of structural inequalities and institutional conditions to  
93 create and reproduce gender disparities in the education and employment systems in Assam.

94

### 95 **3. Review of Literature:**

96 **Boruah & Das (2022)** carried out a study on ‘*Female Labour Force Participation Rates in*  
97 *Assam: Trends, Composition and Determinants.*’ This paper examines the trends in female  
98 labour force participation in Assam in terms of national survey data and the results are that  
99 the participation rate of women in Assam is still way below that of men even after education  
100 has improved. The authors demonstrate that the majority of working women are concentrated  
101 in agriculture and informal sectors, which is a manifestation of structural constraints in  
102 obtaining formal jobs. Education enhances the chances of participation but does not ensure  
103 employment because of the labour market limits and socio-cultural barriers. The paper  
104 concludes that gender differences in the job market are determined not only by human capital  
105 conditions but also by institutional and regional differences which limit the access of women  
106 to gainful employment.

107 **Roy & Barua (2022)** made a study on ‘*Women’s Workforce in Assam: Insights on*  
108 *Composition and Determinants from PLFS Data.*’ This study analyses the nature of the  
109 women workforce in Assam and its determinants using data of Periodic Labour Force Survey.  
110 It concludes that women are overrepresented in self-employment and unpaid family work,  
111 which reflects underreporting of women and their economic contribution to the economy.  
112 Education and urban living have positive effects on the workforce participation, but marital  
113 status and household duties have negative effects. The research notes that gender disparities  
114 still exist in all sectors and suggests specific labour policies and labour skills development  
115 programs to facilitate the increase in the number of women in the labour market and curb the  
116 structural limitations in the labour market.

117 **Nayak & Mahanta (2015)** made a study on ‘*Gender Disparity and Women Empowerment in*  
118 *Assam.*’ This paper is a detailed account of gender inequality in Assam in terms of education,  
119 employment, health and social indicators. It indicates that despite the increased female  
120 literacy over the years, gender inequality in the workforce and economic autonomy is still  
121 sharp. The authors explain these gaps by the patriarchal norms, economic dependence, and a  
122 lack of access to resources. The paper underlines that gender inequality cannot be eradicated  
123 solely through education unless there are equal gains in the areas of employment and  
124 institutionalization. It concludes that development strategies need to be integrated to ensure  
125 women empowerment, and structural gender differences in the state are minimized.

126 **Abdul R. Y. (2019)** carried out a study on ‘*Gender Disparity in Educational Development in*  
127 *Assam.*’ The research paper is specifically based on the gender inequality in the educational  
128 development in districts of Assam. It concludes that despite the fact that the primary level of

129 gender parity has been achieved, there are still gaps in secondary and higher education levels  
130 because of the socio-economic factors, early marriage, and infrastructure deficit. There are  
131 higher gender disparities in rural areas than in urban areas. The paper states that poverty and  
132 social norms restricting access to schooling to girls are closely related to the inequality in  
133 education. It suggests specific re-interventions like; scholarships, transport facilities and  
134 awareness programmes to enhance retention and enrolment of girls in higher education.

135 **Sharma (2020)** carried out a study on '*District-Level Educational Disparities in Assam*. This  
136 study through district level analysis determines regional disparities in gender gaps in literacy,  
137 enrolment and school completion rates. It concludes that less socio-economically developed  
138 districts have greater gender gap in education. Women dropout is especially high in the rural  
139 and marginalized communities because of economic strains and household duties. The study  
140 shows that infrastructural disparities such as absence of secondary schools and inadequate  
141 transport have a dissimilar impact on educational continuation of girls. The author concludes  
142 that gender inequality in education can be reduced in Assam by tackling the issue of uneven  
143 regional development.

144 **Borah (2018)** made a study on '*Women's Work Participation in Northeast India with  
145 Reference to Assam*.' This paper examines trends in the labour participation by women in  
146 Northeast India and the uniqueness of women labour in Assam. It concludes that women play  
147 significant roles in agricultural production, household industries and informal economic  
148 activity but their work is not reflected in official statistics. The paper contends that traditional  
149 measures of employment do not capture the economic contribution of women since they do  
150 not capture unpaid and subsistence activities. It concludes that gender differences in  
151 employment figures are evidence of limitations in measurement and structural inequalities  
152 and that gender sensitive data collection and labour policies are needed.

153

#### 154 **4. Objectives of the Study:**

- 155 i. To examine the trends and patterns of gender disparities in education in  
156 Assam
- 157 ii. To analyze the extent and nature of gender gaps in employment in Assam
- 158 iii. To identify the structural determinants underlying gender disparities and to  
159 derive policy implications for reducing gender inequality in Assam.

160

#### 161 **5. Research Methodology:**

162 This paper will use a descriptive and analytical research design that is all based on secondary  
163 data. The sources used to collect the data are credible such as the Census of India, Periodic  
164 Labour Force Survey (PLFS), National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health  
165 Survey (NFHS), Government of Assam statistical reports and Ministries of Education and  
166 Labour publications. Also, pertinent scholarly journals, books, and policy documents have  
167 been examined to reinforce the analysis framework. Thematic approach has been utilized to  
168 study the trends and patterns of gender disparities in education and employment whereas the  
169 comparative analysis has been utilized to determine the differences among regions, sectors

170 and socio-economic groups. The paper also incorporates the existing literature understanding  
171 to explain policy implications and structural determinants. The methodology will allow a  
172 thorough and systematic interpretation of gender inequality in Assam in a wider socio-  
173 economic and institutional framework.

174

## 175 **6. Discussions & Results:**

176 The following section entails an in-depth discussion of the results of the secondary data as  
177 per the objectives of the research. It looks at the current patterns and trends of gender  
178 disparities in education and employment in Assam and looks at some of the structural  
179 determinants that impact on the disparities. The discussion incorporates empirical findings of  
180 national survey, census data and available literature to give a holistic picture of gender  
181 inequality in the state. The findings are tabulated in an objective-by-objective manner so as to  
182 have systematic interpretation in order to be able to derive any meaningful policy  
183 implications.

184

### 185 **6.1 Trends and Patterns of Gender Disparities in Education in Assam:**

186 The secondary data analysis shows that there are significant positive changes in both access  
187 to and participation of women in education in Assam over the last several decades. The rates  
188 of female literacy have gone up significantly, as a result of national and state-level initiatives  
189 like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Right to Education framework (Government of India,  
190 2011). According to census data, the gender gap in literacy has narrowed steadily, but there  
191 are still unequal levels of literacy, especially in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged  
192 districts (Census of India, 2011). Girls have been enrolled in the elementary level in large  
193 numbers due to the expansion of primary education infrastructure and other incentives like  
194 mid-day meals and scholarships.

195 Nevertheless, the analysis shows that gender differences are still more severe at higher  
196 education stages, especially at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Research suggests  
197 that the rates of dropout among girls are likely to rise after the primary level because of a  
198 complex of socio-cultural and economic reasons, such as early marriage, domestic duties, and  
199 security issues (Sharma, 2020). The information provided by UDISE+ reports further  
200 supports the idea that although gender parity is mostly met at the primary level, the retention  
201 and transition rates of girls decrease as they advance in the educational system (Ministry of  
202 Education, 2022).

203 The issue of regional differences also contributes to the educational outcomes. Poverty,  
204 geographical isolation, and infrastructural deficiencies are the features of the districts that  
205 experience larger gender gaps in education (Government of Assam, 2025). Recurrent  
206 displacement in char and flood prone regions interferes with schooling and with girls being  
207 more prone to end schooling, the displacement affects girls disproportionately. Abdul R. Y.  
208 According to (2019), other obstacles to education that affect rural girls include lack of  
209 transportation, poor sanitation in schools, and secondary institutions, among others, all of  
210 which impede the continuity of education.

211 In the level of higher education, women participation has been enhanced but still  
212 disproportionate in the various fields. The gendered patterns of subject choice are manifested  
213 by women being more likely to attend arts and humanities streams, whereas the proportion of  
214 women in science and technical subjects is lower than that of men (AISHE, 2021). The long-  
215 term consequences of this segregation are based on employment opportunities because  
216 STEM-related areas are more likely to provide better-paying and more stable jobs.

217 The quality of education is another important dimension, but the difference in it is significant  
218 in various parts of the country. In rural and disadvantaged schools, there is a high possibility  
219 of insufficient infrastructure, trained educators, and digital access, which influence the  
220 learning outcomes and disproportionately affect female disadvantaged pupils (UNESCO,  
221 2020). Moreover, socio-economic forces like poverty and parental levels of education affect  
222 the educational levels of girls, and this fact supports intergenerational inequalities.

223 In general, the research results imply that, although Assam has achieved a lot in enhancing  
224 female literacy and enrolment, gender disparities in education are conditioned by structural  
225 inequalities. The fact that dropout rates, regional disparities and disciplinary segregation have  
226 remained stagnant shows that access is not enough but retention, quality and equity should be  
227 considered as well. Such trends underscore the necessity of specific interventions that can  
228 overcome supply-side and demand-side challenges to education of girls.

229

## 230 **6.2 Extent and Nature of Gender Gaps in Employment in Assam:**

231 The comparison of employment statistics indicates that gender inequality in the labour market  
232 is still significant in Assam, even after women have become more educated. The Periodic  
233 Labour Force Survey (PLFS) shows that female labour force participation rates (FLFP) in  
234 Assam are considerably lower than those of men, indicating the continuing gender disparities  
235 in the access to the labour market opportunities (Government of India, 2022). Although men  
236 do mostly participate in formal and wage-earning jobs, women do not take part in anything  
237 other than informal jobs and low salary earning jobs or even unpaid jobs.

238 A major observation is that women are highly concentrated in the agricultural sector and  
239 informal sectors where the employment is marked by low productivity, low-income security  
240 and social insecurity. Research shows that a considerable share of women in Assam is either  
241 doing unpaid family labour or subsistence agriculture, which is usually not recorded in the  
242 official figures of employment (Borah, 2018). The result of this is that it underestimates the  
243 contribution of women to the economy and the actual level of their involvement in the  
244 economy.

245 Another significant area of gender inequalities in work is known as occupational segregation.  
246 Women are over-represented in the traditional feminized industries like handloom, home  
247 workers and small-scale trading, with their participation in formal sectors like administration,  
248 industry and technology being minimal (Desai and Jain, 2019). As Roy and Barua (2022)  
249 emphasize, education raises the chances of women joining the workforce, yet the barriers that  
250 prevent their participation include the absence of appropriate employment opportunities,  
251 discrimination at workplaces, and social norms.

252 Gender inequality in employment is also manifested through wage disparity. It is indicated  
253 that women tend to earn less than men with equal work, especially in the informal sectors  
254 where the regulatory bodies are not so strict (ILO, 2018). This disparity is caused by the lack  
255 of equal pay mechanisms and low bargaining power. Moreover, women also have intermittent  
256 employment in the household, childcare, and social obligations, which impacts their earning  
257 capacity and career advancement.

258 There are also urban-rural disparities. The women in the urban areas are relatively better  
259 educated and have access to more job opportunities, both formal sector jobs and professional  
260 jobs. Conversely, rural women are exposed to a variety of limitations, such as unavailability  
261 of jobs, restriction on mobility, and reliance on agriculture. This is further exacerbated by  
262 infrastructural constraints and absence of skill development opportunities (NSSO, 2019).

263 A significant paradox observed in the literature is that the rise in education levels among  
264 women has not been accompanied by corresponding rises in the workforce participation.  
265 Boruah and Das (2022) claim that this disconnection is explained by structural and cultural  
266 factors that reduce the possibility of women to transform educational achievements into job  
267 results. On the same note, the IWWAGE (2025) report observes that social norms and the  
268 absence of childcare facilities largely lower the participation of women in the labour market.

269 To conclude, it is observed in the analysis that gender differences in employment in Assam  
270 are low labour force participation, occupational segregation, wage inequality, and regional  
271 disparities. Such trends are indicative of structural and socio-cultural restrictions and are  
272 deeply rooted, which restricts the economic opportunities of women despite their education  
273 advancement.

274

### 275 **6.3 Structural Determinants and Policy Implications:**

276 Gender inequality in education and employment in Assam can be explained by the intricate  
277 combination of structural factors, such as socio-cultural norms, economic factors,  
278 institutional constraints, and environmental factors. The determinants are important to  
279 understand to develop effective policy interventions.

280 Patriarchal social norms are one of the most important determinants as they define the gender  
281 roles and expectations in families and the society. Women are prone to focus on home chores  
282 at the expense of education and work thus their level of skills and economic involvement is  
283 constrained (Kabeer, 1999). Women also have limited access to education and jobs especially  
284 in the countryside due to early marriage and division of labour along gender lines.

285 It is also strongly dependent upon economic constraints. Sometimes poverty and income  
286 insecurity contributes to girls receiving less education as opposed to boys, particularly higher  
287 education. The financial means are minimal, which limits access to good education,  
288 vocational training, and jobs (UNDP, 2018). Also, access to credit and productive assets is a  
289 limitation to the entrepreneurial activities of women.

290 Disparities are further aggravated by institutional factors like poor infrastructure, poor policy  
291 execution and lack of job opportunities. There is a shortage of schools, transport, and  
292 healthcare systems in most areas of Assam and remote and flood-prone areas in particular,  
293 which impedes access to education and employment (Government of Assam, 2025). Floods

294 are an environmental weakness that upsets schooling and livelihoods with a higher proportion  
295 being women and girls.

296 In terms of policy, these challenges have to be tackled in a multi-dimensional and combined  
297 approach. The educational policies must be aimed at enhancing retention of girls by use of  
298 scholarships, secure transport and better schooling facilities. Regional disparities can be  
299 mitigated by extension of secondary and tertiary education institutions in the rural settings.

300 Policy of labour markets must be geared towards improving the employment of women by  
301 providing them with skills and entrepreneurial encouragement and encouraging women  
302 friendly work environments. Women should be allowed to be more engaged in the workforce  
303 by ensuring that they are paid equally, have childcare centres, and that their labour rights are  
304 upheld (ILO, 2018).

305 Moreover, convergence of policies is necessary. Education, labour and social welfare sectors  
306 can be coordinated to bring synergies that would promote effectiveness of the interventions.  
307 Monitoring systems based on data must be created to trace the progress and find gaps in  
308 gender equality efforts.

309 Finally, the results indicate that the gender gaps in education and employment in Assam are  
310 also embedded in the structural and institutional aspects. To tackle these inequalities, a long-  
311 term political commitment, specific interventions, and transition to gender-responsive  
312 development policies that facilitates access to education and economic empowerment are  
313 needed.

314

## 315 **7. Findings of the Study:**

316 This study shows that the existing gender difference in education and employment in Assam  
317 remains even though some of the indicators have significantly improved. In the education  
318 sector, the comparison suggests that the literacy levels and enrolment at the primary level  
319 among females has been on the rise over the period owing to the government intervention and  
320 the rise in social awareness. Nevertheless, the differences are still clear at secondary and  
321 higher education levels, whereby girls have a relatively high dropout rate. Early marriages,  
322 family commitments, inaccessibility, and security remain to be among the issues that have  
323 been affecting the continuation of education among girls especially in rural and economically  
324 disadvantaged areas. Furthermore, there is still gender segregation in subject selection where  
325 women are still underrepresented in science and technical subjects, which restricts their  
326 opportunities of getting jobs in future.

327 With regard to employment, the researcher concludes that the female labour force  
328 participation in Assam is still significantly low in comparison to that of men, regardless of the  
329 gains in education. Women are mostly involved in informal sectors like agriculture,  
330 handloom and unpaid family work, which are usually marked by low wages, job insecurity  
331 and absence of social protection. Occupational segregation is a major problem since women  
332 are clustered in low-skilled and low-paying positions, and their presence in formal and high-  
333 paying sectors is still scarce. The difference in wages between men and women working on  
334 similar jobs also speaks volumes of the ingrained inequality in the labour market.

335 Another major gap that is found in the study is the lack of connection between education and  
336 employment outcomes. Though the access to education among women has been enhanced,  
337 this has not been matched by the proportionality in terms of employment. Socio-cultural  
338 norms, which favour domestic duties among women, and structural constraints such as poor  
339 employment opportunities, insufficient skills acquisition, and insufficient institutional  
340 assistance among others contribute greatly to this gap.

341 In addition, the conclusions reveal that structural determinants, including poverty, regional  
342 inequalities, infrastructural constraints, and environmental susceptibility, contribute to gender  
343 inequality. Women in marginalized, rural and flood prone regions are also at a disadvantage  
344 that is compounded limiting their access to education and jobs. On the whole, the research  
345 finds that gender inequalities in Assam are multidimensional and in-depth, and to bring about  
346 sustainable and inclusive growth, the combination of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive  
347 policy interventions is needed.

348

## 349 **8. Conclusion:**

350 This paper has reviewed various trends and patterns of gender inequalities in education and  
351 employment in Assam by analysing secondary data and available literature. The results show  
352 that the state has achieved impressive gains in female literacy, enrolment, and access to  
353 education although at advanced stages of education and across the regions there are still  
354 significant inequalities. The level of poverty, early marriage, poor infrastructure and socio-  
355 cultural norms are structural barriers that still influence the education attainment and  
356 retention of girls. Within the employment sector, the research shows that the labour force  
357 participation of women has been significantly lower as compared to men and that most  
358 women have been concentrated in the informal, low remunerated and unacknowledged  
359 sectors. The lack of economic linkage between education and labour market performance  
360 points to the weaknesses of the human capital approach, in the sense that labour market  
361 institutions, gender normativity, and institutional constraints still limit the economic  
362 participation of women.

363 The analysis also highlights that gender inequalities in education and labour are  
364 interconnected and conditioned by more general structural factors, such as regional  
365 inequalities, environmental insecurity, and insufficient access to resources and opportunities.  
366 The solution to these disparities is a holistic and integrated policy platform that will not only  
367 have the effect of improving access to education, skills and increasing women participation in  
368 the labour market. Conclusively, gender equality in Assam requires a long-term institutional  
369 will, interventions, and gender-sensitive policies which deal with both education and  
370 economic aspects. It is necessary to focus on the holistic approach that would question the  
371 structural inequalities and create the inclusive opportunities to guarantee that women are  
372 fairly involved in the process of state development.

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