

# Title: Mapping Educational Disparities among Women in Rural Assam: An Intersectional Analysis

## Abstract:

Education is a very crucial factor that defines the social equity and empowerment of women; yet, there are still enormous differences in regions and social strata. This paper explores educational disparities in female rural Assam by applying the intersectional model with the aim of distinguishing the overall impact of gender, rurality, socio-economic status, and minority status. The research design of the study is descriptive and analytical, focused on secondary data sources (the Census of India, 2011), NFHS-5 (201921), NSSO reports, and other scholarly publications, which allows mapping the nature and scale of educational inequality and examining the structural conditions that determine access to education. According to the findings, despite the increase of female literacy over the years, rural women, especially elderly, disadvantaged, and minority groups, still experience various and intersecting obstacles, such as poverty, early marriages, poor infrastructures, and socio-cultural factors (Census of India, 2011; NFHS-5, 201921). The paper also notes that the digital divide has appeared as a new aspect of inequality in access to education (UNESCO, 2021). The study uses an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989) to emphasize that the issue of educational disparities is multidimensional and cannot be addressed by using a single factor intervention. The article outlines the main problems and new opportunities, focusing on the importance of inclusive, context-related policies to respond to structural disparities. It concludes that to attain educational equity of rural women in Assam is a holistic strategy involving gender-sensitive planning, infrastructural development, and marginalized communities-specific support.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, Women Education, Rural Assam, Educational Inequality, Gender Disparity.

## 1. Introduction:

It is a well-known fact that education is a major tool of social change, gender equality, and inclusive development. Nevertheless, education is still not evenly distributed among various social groups, especially in the rural and marginalized settings. In India, as well as in Assam, the issue of women educational disparities is conditioned by the interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and geographical factors. Although the literacy rates have changed significantly during the last decades, there are still great disparities between men and women, between rural and urban populations (Census of India, 2011). Assam with its ethnic mix and rural majority population poses peculiar problems in terms of access to educational opportunities in a fair way. The state has made significant gains in the area of female literacy, but still remains lower compared to male literacy, rural women being the most disadvantaged ones (Government of Assam, 2020). Furthermore, the National Family Health Survey shows that a low percentage of women in Assam attain secondary or higher education, which is a problem of retention and continuity in schooling (NFHS-5, 201921).

42 Intersectionality is a concept that offers a critical approach in the interpretation of these  
43 differences. It also highlights the intersection of several axes of identity including gender,  
44 rural place, socio-economic status, and minority affiliation to create stratified disadvantages  
45 (Crenshaw, 1989). In rural Assam, women in the minority and the economically  
46 disadvantaged groups usually encounter a compounded setback such as poverty, early  
47 marriages, lack of infrastructure, and socio-cultural constraints (Sharma and Das, 2018). It is  
48 against this background that the current study aims at mapping the gender disparities in  
49 education among women in rural Assam using the intersectional approach. It will also focus  
50 on the level of inequality, examine the role of interacting factors, and define major challenges  
51 and opportunities with reference to secondary data sources. In such a way, the study helps to  
52 develop a fine-tuned perspective on educational exclusion and educates more inclusive policy  
53 interventions.

54

### 55 **1.1 Conceptual Framework:**

56 The paper is based on the principle of intersectionality, which is a theoretical approach  
57 according to which various social identities and structural inequalities coalesce to either  
58 privilege or disadvantage an individual (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989). When it comes to rural  
59 Assam, the issue of gender does not define the access of women to education but rather the  
60 interaction of a number of socio-economic and cultural forces.

61 The model recognizes four major dimensions, namely, gender, rurality, socio-economic status  
62 and minority identity. Rural societies have gender-based norms that tend to favor male  
63 education as against the female education, which perpetuate inequalities. The rurality also  
64 adds to this disparity because of inadequate education system, inaccessibility, and  
65 institutional inefficiency. The socio-economic status, especially poverty, limits the investment  
66 that families can put in the education of girls to educate them, which increases the rate of  
67 dropping out. Moreover, women who belong to the minority groups, such as religious and  
68 ethnic minorities, experience twice the disadvantage because of the social exclusion and  
69 marginalization.

70 These overlapping forces exist within more comprehensive structural realities like policy  
71 systems, cultural values and institutional practices. These dimensions interplay to create  
72 stratified inequalities that are expressed through low literacy levels, low levels of education  
73 and low access to higher education by rural women in Assam.

74 Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research underlines the fact that the educational  
75 inequalities are interdependent and multidimensional. Using an intersectional lens, the  
76 research aims to conduct a systematic examination of the role in intersecting identities and  
77 structural barriers in determining the results of education and thus offer a more detailed view  
78 of inequality in rural Assam.

79

### 80 **2. Review of Literature:**

81 Basumatary, R., & Das, M. (2018) *Gender Inequality in Education and the Reasons of its*  
82 *Variation Across Assam, India*. This paper will look at gender inequality in educational  
83 education in Assam through the Gender Parity Index (GPI) and Education Development

84 Index (EDI). The results indicate that all the districts and all age groups have females  
85 underperforming males in terms of literacy. The research determines poverty, concentration  
86 of population in rural areas, and socio-religious make up as important factors in inequality. It  
87 also emphasizes that gender gap is growing as age advances, which suggests a problem of  
88 dropout and discontinuation. The regression analysis supports the fact that economic  
89 deprivation has a big impact on the access of females to education. The paper is significant in  
90 learning about structural and intersectional inequalities in Assam.

91 Borgohain, A. (2020)*Current Status of Women in Higher Education in Assam: An Analytical*  
92 *Study*. This paper examines the involvement of women in higher education in Assam based  
93 on secondary sources like Census and AISHE reports. It concludes that female literacy has  
94 increased (67.3%), but it is still below that of the male (78.8%). In the research, the rural and  
95 backward regions are characterized by extreme obstacles such as early marriages, poverty  
96 and gender discrimination. It also shows that female enrolment is decreasing drastically at the  
97 higher levels of education. Research findings conclude that even though policy measures are  
98 in place, structural disparities still affect the progress of women in education, particularly in  
99 the rural areas.

100 Baruah, S. (2021)*Status of Women and Education: A Special Reference in Assam Context*.  
101 The socio-cultural position of women and their role in education in Assam is discussed in this  
102 paper. It concludes that there is a patriarchal system that restricts women access to education  
103 despite the relatively favourable position in relation to the other Indian states. The paper  
104 points out that the rates of female dropout are still high particularly at the secondary levels.  
105 Government programs such as Pragyan Bharati have enhanced access that is not enough to  
106 eradicate disparities. The study highlights the importance of socio-cultural restrictions and  
107 economic factors in determining the educational participation of women.

108 Konwar, P. (2015)*Development of Women Education in Assam*. This paper gives an analytical  
109 and historical account of women education in Assam. It demonstrates that whereas women  
110 were exposed to informal education in the previous eras, contemporary education was spread  
111 in the colonial times. Based on secondary data, the research points to the constant growth of  
112 female literacy, but points to the long-standing disparities of enrolment and retention. The  
113 results indicate that socio-economic backwardness and rural isolation still remain an obstacle  
114 to the development of women education. The paper highlights the role of education in socio-  
115 economic development.

116 Kalita, D. (2017)*Higher Education and Women Involvement in Assam: An Analytical Study*.  
117 This paper is concerned with the issue of women involvement in higher education in Assam.  
118 It concludes that even though there has been an increase in enrolment, there has been no  
119 gender equality anywhere in education. The paper points out that poverty, infrastructure and  
120 social restrictions are more in the rural women. Assam has a lower Gender Parity Index than  
121 the national average, which is a sign of inequality. The study highlights the necessity of  
122 specific policies to enhance the female representation in higher education.

123 Das, S. (2019)*Gender Gap in Higher Education in Assam*. This research paper discusses the  
124 enrolment in higher education in Assam. It concludes that the bulk of the student population  
125 is at the undergraduate stage, with the percentage of female representation declining sharply  
126 at the postgraduate and doctoral stages. Structural obstacles in the study include restricted

127 institutional access and socio-economic factors. It concludes that gender inequalities become  
128 greater with the rise in the level of education, a manifestation of deep-rooted inequality.

129 Sharma, S. P. (2021)*Impact of Female Literacy on Population Growth: A Study of Assam*.  
130 This paper examines the association between female literacy and socio-economic  
131 development in Assam. It concludes that higher levels of female literacy are very important  
132 factors that have led to low fertility and better socio-economic status. The research highlights  
133 that education is one of the important determinants of women empowerment. It however adds  
134 that the level of literacy is not evenly distributed in rural and marginalized communities. The  
135 study illustrates the necessity of inclusive educational policies.

136 Deka, R. & Ahmed, S. (2019)*Gender Discrimination in Education and Economic Status in*  
137 *Rural Assam*. This paper explores gender discrimination in Assam rural areas especially in  
138 the districts such as Goalpara. It concludes that girls are usually denied an education because  
139 of poverty and domestic chores. The researcher points out that rural women continue to be  
140 among the most disadvantaged groups as far as education, health, and employment are  
141 concerned. It concludes that the socio-economic deprivation and cultural norms are  
142 significant impediments to female education.

143

### 144 **3. Objectives of the Study:**

145

- 146 i. To examine the nature and extent of educational disparities among women in rural  
147 Assam.
- 148 ii. To analyze the intersectional factors- gender, rurality, socio-economic status,  
149 minority identity affecting access to education.
- 150 iii. To identify challenges and opportunities for improving educational access among  
151 rural women using secondary data insights.

152

### 153 **4. Research Methodology:**

154 The proposed research design is descriptive and analytical research design using secondary  
155 sources of data. The Census of India (2011), NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 reports, NSSO datasets,  
156 UDISE+ statistics, as well as the appropriate government and academic publications have  
157 supplied the data. The analysis uses an intersectional approach to analyze the role of gender,  
158 rurality, socio-economic status, and minority identity in access to education among women in  
159 rural Assam. Disparities and patterns are analyzed through methods like trend analysis,  
160 comparative analysis and thematic interpretation. This method allows understanding the  
161 educational inequalities systematically without the main field research.

162

### 163 **5. Discussions & Result:**

#### 164 **5.1 Nature and Extent of Educational Disparities among Women in Rural Assam:**

165 The essence and scope of women educational inequalities in rural Assam is the main focus of  
166 the current study because it is highly correlated with the general goal of mapping inequalities  
167 by an intersectional approach. Educational disparity is not simply about the disparity in the  
168 literacy levels, but also the disparity in terms of enrolment, retention, completion and access  
169 to higher education. These inequalities are conditioned by a set of factors, which includes  
170 gender discrimination, socio-economic limitations, geographical seclusion, and culture in  
171 rural Assam.

172 In a basic level, the level of literacy offers a point of entry to measure the inequality in  
173 education. The Census of India (2011) says that the general literacy rate in Assam is 72.19,  
174 male literacy is 77.85 and female literacy is 66.27. This disparity of over 11 percentage points  
175 shows there has been a long-standing gender difference in access to education. Nevertheless,  
176 it is more alarming when one thinks of rural areas in isolation. The level of rural female  
177 literacy is still much lower than the urban female literacy, which means that the  
178 disadvantaged position of the rural women is exacerbated (Census of India, 2011). This rural-  
179 urban discord indicates an overlap of gender and geography, which is one of the issues of the  
180 given work.

181 In addition to the level of basic literacy, inequalities are even greater concerning educational  
182 levels. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 201921), very few women  
183 in Assam have either secondary or higher education. Although there is an improvement in  
184 enrolment in primary school because of policy interventions, girl's dropout rates escalate at  
185 secondary education. This tendency indicates that the access is not the guarantee of continuity  
186 in education. Girls are usually compelled to quit school because of early marriage, family  
187 commitments, and poverty (NFHS-5, 201921).

188 The level of inequality can also be observed in the case of higher education participation.  
189 Research has shown that female enrolment reduces considerably with increased level of  
190 education and especially in the rural regions (Borgohain, 2020). This is indicative of barriers  
191 in the structure like the absence of facilities within the vicinity, transport, and security issues.  
192 In most of the rural areas of Assam, the distance to colleges and universities is not within  
193 reach and thus families are not encouraged to send girls further so as to obtain higher  
194 education. As a result, rural women still have low levels of educational attainment, which  
195 supports the cycles of socio-economic disadvantage.

196 Socio-economic status is another significant aspect of inequality. Poverty is a key factor in  
197 defining educational access and outcome. The rural Assam families value immediate  
198 economic survival over long term investment in education, particularly to girls. This means  
199 that girls tend to be more active in the household or income-generating activities, which  
200 makes them attend school irregularly or abandon it altogether (Deka & Ahmed, 2019). This  
201 aspect of the economy overlaps with the norms of gender, which only exacerbates inequality.

202 The aspect of culture and social factors also play a significant role in defining educational  
203 disparities. In rural Assam, patriarchal cultures tend to prioritize male education, which they  
204 consider as an investment in their future economic security. Contrarily, the education offered  
205 to girls is not considered important at times because of marriage and household chores. In a  
206 number of rural communities, early marriage is a burning problem that has direct implications  
207 on the continuation of education by girls (Baruah, 2021). These socio-cultural practices  
208 depict the effects of gender expectations on education outcomes.

209 These disparities are further complicated by the fact that minority identity intersects with  
210 them. Social exclusion and economic marginalization frequently pose an added burden to  
211 women in religious and ethnic minority groups, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled  
212 Tribes (STs). These populations are less likely to be well-read and have access to educational  
213 materials than the rest of the population (Basumatary & Das, 2018). In places like char  
214 (riverine) and tea garden communities, this is more serious because of the geographical  
215 isolation, bad infrastructure and absence of institutional support.

216 Moreover, there is also a disparity related to the quality of education in the rural areas. In  
217 Assam, there are many rural schools with poor infrastructures, untrained teachers, and no  
218 basic facilities like toilets to the girls. Not only do these problems affect learning, but also  
219 deter regular attendance especially in the case of adolescent girls. Lack of gender sensitive  
220 learning facilities is one of the factors that lead to increased dropout and low education levels.

221 New dimensions of educational inequality have been brought about by recent developments,  
222 namely, the digital divide. Rural women have been the more affected by the rising use of  
223 digital platforms in education, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, because  
224 of the lack of access to digital technologies and the internet. This has also increased the  
225 urban-rural divide, as well as the male-female divide (UNESCO, 2021). The digital divide is  
226 therefore a new type of intersectional inequality that should be taken into account in the  
227 measurement of educational inequalities.

228 Overall, the problem of educational inequalities among Assam women living in rural areas is  
229 multidimensional and entrenched in structural inequalities. These inequalities are reflected in  
230 a number of indicators such as literacy, enrolment, retention and higher education. The  
231 combination of rurality, social-economic status, and minority with gender produces  
232 multifaceted constraints to education among women. Exploiting them, using secondary data,  
233 the study not only legitimizes its intersectional emphasis but also adds value to a holistic  
234 explanation of educational inequality in rural Assam.

235

## 236 **5.2 Compare Intersectional Factors of Gender, Rurality, Socio-Economic Status, and** 237 **Minority Identity in Terms of Access to Education:**

238 The second objective of the paper is to examine the combined effects of various and  
239 interacting social factors, including gender, rurality, socio-economic status and minority  
240 status, on access to education among rural Assamese women. This goal is based on the  
241 theoretical model of *intersectionality* according to which inequalities are not isolated but are  
242 determined by the interplay of various social identities and structural factors (Crenshaw,  
243 1989). The combination of these factors in the rural Assam setting creates overlapping  
244 disadvantages which significantly limit access to education by women.

245 To begin with, *gender* is also one of the basic dimensions of inequality in education. And  
246 even with the policy measures to achieve gender parity, women in rural Assam still have to  
247 struggle with systemic constraints due to patriarchal practices and norms. Families tend to  
248 support male children more in their education as it is considered a better investment and girls  
249 have to add to the home chores. Such gender bias leads to low enrolment and high dropout  
250 rates of girls, especially on the secondary level (Baruah, 2021). This is also worsened by

251 early marriage which breaks the continuity of education and hinders future achievements in  
252 education. In this way, gender is an influential factor that defines access to education.

253 Secondly, *rurality* is significant as a way of consolidating disparities in education. In Assam,  
254 rural areas are characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of educational facilities and poor  
255 transportation facilities. In most of the villages, secondary schools and colleges are not close  
256 enough and the girls find it hard to further their education beyond primary level. Security  
257 issues and movement limitations also discourage the families to take girls to far away  
258 schools. As a result, women in rural areas have a structural disadvantage relative to women in  
259 urban areas (Census of India, 2011). The rural setting, thus, overlaps with gender to enhance  
260 educational exclusion.

261 Thirdly, *socio-economic status* is a very important determinant of access to education. In  
262 rural Assam, poverty is still a common problem and the poor families are not able to afford  
263 both the direct and indirect costs of education. The costs associated with school supplies,  
264 uniforms, transportation and private tuition impose financial strains on the education of girls  
265 which are increasingly disproportionately impacting the education of girls. Girls are in most  
266 cases pulled out of school to help in put food on the table or look after other children. It has  
267 been demonstrated that economic deprivation is closely linked with low levels of educational  
268 achievement among women (Deka & Ahmed, 2019). This implies that socio-economic status  
269 does not only restrict access, but it also influences retention and advancement in the  
270 education system.

271 Intersection of *minority identity* is an additional dimension to educational inequality. Assam  
272 is the dwelling place of different ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, most of which are  
273 differentially marginalized. Minority women, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled  
274 Tribes (STs), and religious minorities, tend to be disadvantaged even more through the social  
275 exclusion, cultural, and economic deprivation. As an example, education infrastructure in  
276 char (riverine) regions and tea garden communities is highly underdeveloped, and the literacy  
277 level is much lower than the state average (Basumatary & Das, 2018). Access to government  
278 schemes and institutional support also is limited in these communities further limiting the  
279 opportunity of women to access education.

280 More to the point, these factors are not independent of each other; instead, they overlap and  
281 support each other. As an illustration, a woman who is a minority in a rural region is most  
282 likely to encounter a compound disadvantage, as a result of her gender, geographical or  
283 territorial location, economic status, and social identity. The accumulating impact of this  
284 leads to greater educational marginalization than those who have a single form of  
285 disadvantage. The intersectional framework can therefore help us have a more detailed  
286 conceptualization of inequality by pointing out how these overlapping factors determine  
287 educational outcomes.

288 This intersectional analysis is backed by empirical data based on secondary data. The  
289 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 201921) states that women in poorer households  
290 and rural origins are much less educated than women in wealthier and urban environments.  
291 Likewise, in the district-level data, it is noted that the more marginalized communities are  
292 concentrated in an area, the lower the female literacy and the higher the dropout rates. These  
293 trends highlight the need to examine the issue of educational access through various aspects  
294 of inequality.

295 Also, these intersectional determinants interact with institutional and policy-related factors.  
296 Government programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have  
297 increased the rate of enrolment, however, these efforts are usually unequal among various  
298 social classes. Marginalized women might not be able to access these programs because of  
299 their ignorance, administration or socio-cultural restrictions. This underscores the necessity of  
300 having more targeted and inclusive policy interventions which meet the special needs of  
301 different groups.

302 **Digital divide** is another factor that is emerging and is becoming more relevant in recent  
303 years. In rural Assam, digital education is still not accessible because of the poor connection  
304 to the internet and the absence of digital devices. Women especially those living in low-  
305 income families are less likely to access smartphones or computers, which further limits their  
306 educational possibilities (UNESCO, 2021). This digital inequality cuts across the already  
307 present socio-economic and gender-based disparities, posing new challenges in the quest to  
308 achieve educational equity.

309 To sum up, the intersectional factor analysis shows that the issue of educational differences  
310 between women in rural Assam is enclosed in a tangle of social, economic, and cultural  
311 determinants. The interactions between gender, rurality, socio-economic status and minority  
312 identity generate cumulative disadvantages, denying access to education at any of the levels.  
313 With the help of these overlapping dimensions, the given work does not only legitimize its  
314 interest in the given area known as intersectionality but also enhances the overall  
315 interpretation of the issue of educational inequality. This is necessary in the design of  
316 effective and inclusive policies that can target the underlying causes of the disparity and  
317 facilitate fair educational opportunities to all women in rural Assam.

318

### 319 **5.3 Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Educational Access among Rural** 320 **Women:**

321 The third goal of the research is to define the main issues and prospects of the enhancement  
322 of educational access of women in rural Assam, relying on the observations made in the  
323 context of secondary data sources. This is important to bring the research into its overall  
324 purpose of mapping the educational disparities using an intersectional framework. Although  
325 the other segments have pointed out the nature and determinants of inequality, this objective  
326 shifts to a more practical knowledge by looking at the barriers that impede access and the  
327 possible opportunities of inclusive educational progress. These structural challenges and  
328 emerging opportunities are strongly based on secondary data of the sources like Census of  
329 India (2011), NFHS-5 (201921), and current research studies.

#### 330 **Challenges:**

331 The secondary data analysis shows that there are several, interconnected factors limiting  
332 access to education by rural women in Assam:

- 333 **i. Endemic Gender Inequality:** Patriarchal traditions still affect educational  
334 choices, with boys usually being given priority in education than girls. Girls are  
335 supposed to do domestic chores which results in inconsistent attendance and  
336 increased school dropouts (Baruah, 2021).

- 337        **ii. Poverty and Economic Constraints:** Socio-economic deprivation is still a  
338        significant obstacle. Poor families usually pull girls out of school to work at home  
339        or minimize the costs of education (Deka & Ahmed, 2019).
- 340        **iii. Inadequate Educational Infrastructure:** There are not enough schools in many  
341        of the rural areas and more so the secondary and higher secondary levels. Girls are  
342        not encouraged to continue with education because of poor infrastructure, lack of  
343        sanitation facilities, and a lack of female teachers (Census of India, 2011).
- 344        **iv. Accessibility and Geographical Problems:** Riverine (char) and remote locations  
345        have serious connectivity challenges, and it is hard to reach institutions of  
346        learning. This is particularly impactful on girls because of the issue of mobility  
347        and safety (Basumatary & Das, 2018).
- 348        **v. Early Marriage and Social Norms:** Early marriage is still common in some rural  
349        areas resulting in the abandonment of education among the adolescent girls  
350        (NFHS-5, 201921).
- 351        **vi. Marginalization of Minority Communities:** SC, ST and minority women  
352        experience multiplied disadvantages as they are excluded, have low income and  
353        poor institutional support.
- 354        **vii. Digital Divide:** The move to digital learning has revealed disparities in access to  
355        technology. Women in the rural areas do not have access to smartphones, internet  
356        connectivity, or digital literacy (UNESCO, 2021).

357

#### 358 **Opportunities:**

359        Nevertheless, despite these issues, secondary data also show that there are a number of  
360        opportunities that can be used to enhance educational access:

- 361        **i. Government Policy Initiatives:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti  
362        Padhao and the stipulations of national education policy (NEP) 2020 are some of  
363        the initiatives that have increased the number of girls enrolled and the awareness  
364        of the education of girls.
- 365        **ii. Growth of Educational Facilities:** New initiatives to build schools and colleges  
366        in the countryside and programs that supply free textbooks, uniforms and bicycles  
367        have enhanced accessibility.
- 368        **iii. Rise in Female Literacy Trends:** Records have shown that female literacy has  
369        been on a continuous rise over the years and this has been an indication that there  
370        has been a positive change in the attitude of society towards the education of  
371        women (Census of India, 2011).
- 372        **iv. Role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and NGOs:** Community based organizations  
373        are making a huge impact in ensuring that rural women are educated, empowered  
374        and made aware.
- 375        **v. Digital Education and Skill Development:** The digital divide continues but with  
376        the proliferation of digital infrastructure and literacy initiatives, there are new  
377        avenues of overcoming the educational disparities.
- 378        **vi. Targeted Interventions for Marginalized Groups:** Special programs targeting  
379        SC/ST and minority groups can be used to better tackle intersectional inequalities.

380        **vii. Increased Awareness and Social Change:** A shift in the attitudes towards the  
381        value of girl's education is slowly diminishing gender bias particularly among the  
382        younger generations.

383        Finally, the analysis of the secondary data offered the identification of challenges and  
384        opportunities that help to gain a clear picture of the barriers to the structure and the  
385        possibilities of enhancing educational access among rural women in Assam. The results  
386        support the significance of using an intersectional approach that considers various aspects of  
387        inequality at the same time. Although such factors as poverty, gender norms, and  
388        infrastructural shortages still impede the process, new prospects in policy, community  
389        involvement, and digital development present new opportunities to change. Thus, having  
390        equal and inclusive approach incorporating these observations is critical to achieving fair  
391        educational results and accomplishing the overall goals of the study.

392

## 393        **6. Findings of the Study:**

394        The research results are obtained as a result of the in-depth examination of secondary sources  
395        and the intersectional debate concerning the issue of educational inequality among rural  
396        Assam women. These results indicate the interconnectedness and multiple dimensions of  
397        disparities in education access.

398        **i. Persistent Gender Disparity in Education:** The researcher investigates that even  
399        though the general literacy level is improving; in Assam, a large disparity between  
400        the genders continues to exist in rural areas. The level of female literacy still  
401        remains lower than that of male literacy and especially in the rural regions  
402        meaning that access to education is not even (Census of India, 2011).

403        **ii. Pronounced Rural Urban Divide:** Education inequality is high in rural than in  
404        urban. Rural women have little access to educational facilities, lack of proper  
405        infrastructure as well as connectivity, which greatly influences their educational  
406        achievements.

407        **iii. Low Educational Attainment beyond Primary Level:** Although the enrolment  
408        in the primary level has improved, the girls have higher rates of dropping out in  
409        the secondary and higher secondary levels. It means that access does not always  
410        guarantee retention or completion of education (NFHS-5, 2019).

411        **iv. Powerful Effect of Socio-Economic Status:** Poverty is also found to be a driving  
412        force of educational inequality. Girls of weaker backgrounds tend to quit  
413        education because of financial impact and domestic chores (Deka and Ahmed,  
414        2019).

415        **v. Impact of Patriarchal Norms and Social Practices:** The cultural influences of  
416        gender bias, preference of boy's education, and early marriage are the main factors  
417        that interfere with the education of girls and their retention (Baruah, 2021).

418        **vi. Intersectional Disadvantage in Women of Minority:** Women who are a part of  
419        the minority communities, such as SCs, STs, and religious minorities, are  
420        subjected to compounded disadvantage as they face social exclusion, economic  
421        deprivation, and are not supported by the institutions (Basumatary and Das, 2018).

- 422 **vii. Poor Educational Facilities in Rural Areas:** Schools, particularly higher  
423 education, lack of basic facilities and trained teachers are all factors that make  
424 rural women less active and more likely to drop out.
- 425 **viii. Emerging Digital Divide as a New Barrier:** The growing dependence on digital  
426 education has only brought new disparities, with rural women having less access  
427 to digital technology and the internet, which further deepens the educational  
428 inequality divide (UNESCO, 2021).
- 429 **ix. Positive Trends in Female Literacy and Policy Impact:** Female literacy and  
430 enrolment have been steadily improving as a result of government action and  
431 awareness creation, and shows potential to improve.
- 432 **x. Requirement of Intersectional Policy Approach:** The paper discovers that the  
433 educational disparities cannot be tackled using a one-dimensional approach.  
434 Interventions should be effective given the compounding effect of gender, rurality,  
435 socio-economic status, and minority identity.

436 On the whole, the results point to the fact that educational inequalities among women in rural  
437 Assam are highly structural and intersectional. Although there has been an improvement,  
438 there are still massive gaps that require specific and inclusive policy interventions.

439

## 440 **7. Conclusion:**

441 This paper aimed to map the educational inequalities among women in rural Assam with an  
442 intersectional perspective in terms of secondary data and descriptive-analytical approach. The  
443 discussion shows that although the levels of female enrolment and literacy have been  
444 improving over the last few decades, access to and educational achievement of rural women  
445 is highly unequal and structurally limited. These inequalities are not isolated events but an  
446 outcome of the combination of gender, rurality, socio-economic status, and minority identity,  
447 which add up to educational outcomes. The results clearly show that discrimination on gender  
448 basis is still a factor that affects the educational access, especially in the rural areas where  
449 there are patriarchal beliefs, early marriage, and domestic issues that limit the education paths  
450 of women. Simultaneously, inequalities are further compounded by rural disadvantage, in  
451 form of poor infrastructure, institutional access and geographical isolation. The problem is  
452 aggravated by socio-economic deprivation since poverty restricts access to and persistence of  
453 education. Also, women with minority and marginalized backgrounds are excluded in several  
454 tiers, which underscores the need to have an intersectional approach in the examination of  
455 educational inequalities.

456 The research also shows that the enrolment and literacy gains do not always lead to equity in  
457 the achievement of education. The secondary level has high dropout rates, low involvement  
458 in higher learning, and the new digital divide, which signifies the enduring gaps in the  
459 education system. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals a number of opportunities, such as,  
460 the progressive government policies, the growing awareness regarding the education of girls,  
461 and the growing role of community-based interventions. These trends indicate that there can  
462 be a significant change in case strategies are aligned. To sum up, the educational gap between  
463 women in rural Assam cannot be addressed only by gender-specific interventions and needs a  
464 comprehensive and intersectional policy. Specific solutions are required that would tackle the  
465 economic barriers, lack of infrastructures, cultural limitations, and digital inequalities.

466 Improving the rural education infrastructure, gender sensitivity, and accessibility by  
467 marginalized groups are key measures to an equitable education. Finally, rural women  
468 empowerment by means of education is not only a social justice issue but also a key channel  
469 towards sustainable and inclusive development in Assam.

470

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