

IMPACT OF GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT- A BRIEF STUDY

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Abstract:

Gender disparity refer to differences between male and female in various aspects such as - education, wage scale, labour force participation, access to economic resources, participation in political ground.

Gender equality is one of the important sustainable development goal. This goal creates the development path of a nation. In Assam female comprise about 48.92% of the total population and their work participation is only about 16.1% which shows a very high gender disparity in Assam. 30.8% women get married off before attaining adulthood in Assam and also start childbearing before their own bodies are fully developed.

The present study deals with the impact of gender disparity on economic development in Assam and also aimed to ascertain the probable policy measures to reduce the problem of gender disparity in Assam.

Key words: (Gender disparity, labour force participation, child bearing).

Introduction:

In recent times, all the developing nations around the world are experiencing gender disparity more than the developed economies.

Assam is situated in the North - East of India and is the largest north eastern state in terms of population while 2nd in terms of its geographical area. Assam covers an area of 78,438 square kilometre.

As per the census 2011, the total population of Assam is 3.12 crores. Thus the population of Assam forms 2.58% of India in 2011. Assam has a total population of 31,205,575 in which males were 1,59,39,443 while females were 1,52,66,133. The sex ratio in Assam is 954 and the female literacy ratio is 67.27%.

Since, Assam is a state with multiethnicity, it has been experiencing insurgency for the last few decades because of which its social fabric and economy is under threat. The worst victims are the women. In certain aspects, the position of female in Assam is weaker than in other states of the country. According to Assam Human Development Report (Govt.of Assam , 2003), the state lagged behind Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Most of the Assamese women remain suppressed by their husbands, in laws, etc. and are economically dependent upon their male counterparts throughout their lives. Due to absence of awareness to acquire basic knowledge and information regarding their rights, facilities and advantages, there is always lack of economic empowerment among the Assamese females (Nayak, Purusottom and Mahanta, Bidisha , 2015).

Review of Literature:

- 1) A study by Ali (2011) established that females are the most affected group in developing countries, regarding basic education, job participation, freedom of expression, as well as in political participation.
- 2) A study by Dollar and Gatti (1999) concludes that the high female attainment is associated with the Protestant religions and with good civil liberties, while low achievement is weakly associated with the Muslim and Hindu religions. It confirms that the gender inequality reflect some different social, cultural or religion preferences about gender roles.
- 3) The work of Klasen (1999) shows a strong correlation between gender disparity in both (secondary) education level and growth, and economic growth unaffected by controls for potential endogeneities and possibly caused by distortion effects on the quality of human capital related to gender disparity. The use of this human capital is conditional on gender biases in employment and other productive use of this human capital. There are strong linkages between female formal employment and economic growth, although the direction of causality is unclear and may be simultaneous.
- 4) The work of Lagerlof (1999) examines the impact of gender inequality in education on fertility and economic growth. The paper argues that in the initial stage, gender disparity in education can lead to a self- perpetuating equilibrium of continued gender inequality in education, with the consequences of high fertility and low economic growth.
- 5) A study by Moheyuddin (2005) concludes that the gender disparity in education and health suggests that low investment in women's human capital is not simply an efficient economic choice for developing economies. He stated that gender disparity in education is bad for economic growth. He suggests that an exogenous increase in girls access to education creates a better environment for economic growth and that the result is particularly strong for middle income countries. Thus, societies that have a preference for not investing in girls have to pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income.

Objective of the study:

The present study attempts the following general objective and some specific objectives associated with the general objective which would try to expose the actual picture of the study.

So, the general objective is to study the linkage between gender disparity and economic growth

Associated with the general objective following are some specific objectives -

- I. To study the impact of gender disparity in education.
- II. To study the impact of gender disparity in employment.
- III. To study or to suggest some remedial measures or policy measures to reduce gender disparity.

Methodology :

The present study is totally based on secondary data only. These data are mainly collected from different internet sources, various articles, magazines, newspapers, research papers, etc.

Discussion:

Gender disparity and economic growth:

The role of women in economic growth has been a popular topic in recent times. Growth theory proposes that physical capital, human capital and labour force are the most vital factors that influence economic growth, which in turn depends on technological progress and the institutional framework of the production of the countries (Fedderke, 2002).

The importance of human capital had led to the viewing of the quality of the labour force and sees education, health and experience among other factors as central elements of human capital that can boost labour productivity (Jones, 2002).

The linkage between gender disparity and economic growth has become one of the subjects in policy-making areas and social sciences areas. Gender equality is assumed to contribute to the overall development of the economy (World Bank, 2012) due to it increases the pool of talents of which human capital is drawn from.

There exists a considerable amount of literature that studied gender and economic growth and have come up with arguments on how gender inequality can act as a barrier to economic growth. Concerning gender disparity in education and economic growth, analysing the findings of most of the works of literature, results suggest that when there is gender inequality in education, it can reduce the average amount of human capital in a society which acts as a barrier in economic performance. This effect does so by restricting the pool of talent from which to draw for education, thereby excluding highly qualified girls who could outperform boys and taking less skilled boys as the case may be. In contrast, if there is a decline in the marginal returns to education with imperfect substitutability between males and females. When there is a restriction in the education of girls to lower levels, while educating more boys at a higher level, this means that the marginal returns to educating girls are higher than that of boys and this would increase the overall economic performance (Knowles et al. 2002, Schultz 1993 Blackden 2006).

Impact of gender disparity in education:

Gender disparity in education refers to the unequal access and opportunities for education between males and females. It involves differences in enrollment rates, completion rates, quality of education and subject choices.

Gender disparity in education acts as a barrier hindering girls and women from accessing quality education. Thus disparity affects individuals personal development and has broader societal implications, including economic growth and social progress.

Another dimension of gender disparity in education is dropout rates. Which means the number of students who leave school before completing their education. Dropout rates often proportionately affect girls and women due to factors such as early marriage, pregnancy, financial constraints, and cultural norms which prioritizing boys education over girls. These factors acts as a barrier in personal and professional growth opportunities for females.

Another indicator of educational attainment which reflect gender disparity is - literacy rates. In Assam, women have lower literacy rates than men, which limits their access to employment opportunities and empowerment.

Access to tertiary education, such as universities and colleges, is another area where gender disparities persist. In many parts of the world, women face barriers such as limited opportunities, financial constraints and societal expectations that discourage them from pursuing higher education.

The aim to provide universal primary education is becoming successful in most countries around the world. But there exist a mixed situation at secondary and higher education levels, girls are still less likely than boys to even start secondary education in Assam, where education is generally compulsory upto age 14. Women are less likely to choose scientific and technological fields of study, and even when they do, they are less likely to take up a career in these fields - a concern given skills shortages in the work place, the generally more promising career and earnings prospects in these fields, and the livelihood of positive spillovers from more skilled workers in these fields to innovation and growth.

In developing countries, poor families may not be able to afford to send all their children's to school and boys may come first when deciding which child to keep in education. Certainly when primary schooling is made free, girls attendance rises.

The increasing rate of female literacy is quite satisfactory but it is not upto the mark. Even it can be seen that the drop out rate of school going girls in Assam is still increasing. A primary level, the average drop out rate of girls has increased from 5% in 2009-10 to 11.9% in 2011-12. And upper primary level from 13.5% in 2009-10 to 14.3%.

Impact of gender disparity in employment:

The labour force participation rate for women in India is one of the lowest in the world (ILO, 2017). Despite educational gains in terms of increasing literacy among women (literacy rates of women have increased from 16.83 per cent in 1951 to 65.46 per cent in 2011; Government of India, 2011), the labour force participation rate for women in 2017 was 28.5 per cent (compared with 82 per cent for men) (World Economic Forum, 2017). Female participation rates declined from 34.1 per cent in 1999–2000 to 27.2 per cent in 2011–2012, and wide gender differences in participation rate also persists (World Economic Forum, 2017).

In recent years, more women have entered the workforce, but often experience more difficulty in finding a job. Women earn less than men and are more likely to work part time. Furthermore, the choices of young women concentrated in educational, health, administrative areas of work and they are under represented in the business sector.

In India, as well as in Assam, the gender disparity exist to a large extent because women are engaged in all the domestic tasks of daily life which is unpaid but unavoidable. In Assam, women are more likely confined to the most vulnerable jobs, frequently in the informal sector. Families with young children need affordable childcare if parents are to work. So, in Assam, parents most often mothers are less likely to seek a job.

Following are the impacts of gender disparity -

a) India's societal norms are such that women are expected to take the responsibility of family care and childcare. This stereotype is a critical barrier to women's labor force participation. Due to this, women are in constant conflict over-allotment of time for work and life is a war of attrition for them.

b) In India in 2019, internet users were 67% male and 33% female, and this gap is even bigger in rural areas. This divide can become a barrier for women to access critical education, health, and financial services, or to achieve success in activities or sectors that are becoming more digitized.

d) Women hold most of the administrative and data-processing roles that artificial intelligence and other technologies threaten to usurp. As routine jobs become automated, the pressure on women will intensify and they will experience higher unemployment rates.

e) Globally, major gaps in gendered data and the lack of trend data make it hard to monitor progress. In India, too, significant gaps in data on the girl child prevent a systematic longitudinal assessment of the lives of girls.

Impact of Covid-19: Owing to Covid-19, global female employment is 19% more at risk than male employment (ILO estimates).

For India, several estimates show that, compared to men, women were 9.5% less likely to be employed in August 2020 compared to August 2019.

In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (which measures gaps that exist in the economic participation of women), India slipped to 112th place this year, simply because over 70 lakh Indian women have dropped out of work.

Remedial measures or policy measures to reduce gender disparity -

Key policy measures for gender disparity in educational sector:

Gender gaps in educational participation are related to economic and socio-cultural factors which often require a comprehensive policy approaches. These approaches in Assam could include -

1) Reducing the direct and indirect costs of schooling by decreasing or eliminating school fees and the provision of study materials, uniforms and meals.

2) Raise awareness of the benefits of education using different targets for boys and girls and increase the returns to education by improving the quality of schools, teachers and curriculum and their labour market relevance to reduce dropouts in Assam .

3) Ensuring that the relatively high share of development aid which is focused on gender equality in the education sector supports girls completion of schooling, including supporting a favour or friendly environment for girls by providing safe travel to school and separate common room facilities.

Key policy measures for gender disparity in employment:

To ensure sustainable, high and balanced economic growth in the near future, improving female labour market is needed.

Following are the possible policy measures to reduce gender disparity in employment -

- 1) Employers should prioritize creating a diverse and inclusive workplace culture that values individuals regardless of gender.
- 2) Government should implement equal pay and benefits to all irrespective of gender.
- 3) Implement flexible work policies to support female employees needs to foster a healthy work-life balance.
- 4) Providing adequate parental leaves for mother's and father's is crucial for ensuring gender equality.
- 5) Provide subsidized childcare services can help alleviate the burden on working parents.
- 6) Learning and development opportunities should be made available to all employees. Encourage women to enroll in training programs that are usually male dominated to advance women's careers: skills building programs leadership training; technical training and other resources.

Conclusion:

The result suggests that an invrin girls access to education creates a better environment for economic growth. Thus, societies that have a preference for not investing in girls have to pay a price for it in terms of slower growth and reduced income.

Promoting gender equality in education and employment can lead to increase in economic growth which would further help to reach economic efficiency, create human capital.

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