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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**MAPPING EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES AMONG WOMEN IN RURAL ASSAM: AN
INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS**

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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.

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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, 2019/21).

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

Conceptual Framework:-

The paper is based on the principle of intersectionality, which is a theoretical approach according to which various social identities and structural inequalities coalesce to either privilege or disadvantage an individual (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1989). When it comes to rural Assam, the issue of gender does not define the access of women to education but rather the interaction of a number of socio-economic and cultural forces. The model recognizes four major dimensions, namely, gender, rurality, socio-economic status and minority identity. Rural societies have gender-based norms that tend to favor male education as against the female education, which perpetuate inequalities. The rurality also adds to this disparity because of inadequate education system, inaccessibility, and institutional inefficiency. The socio-economic status, especially poverty, limits the investment that families can put in the education of girls to educate them, which increases the rate of dropping out. Moreover, women who belong to the minority groups, such as religious and ethnic minorities, experience twice the disadvantage because of the social exclusion and marginalization. These overlapping forces exist within more comprehensive structural realities like policy systems, cultural values and institutional practices. These dimensions interplay to create stratified inequalities that are expressed through low literacy levels, low levels of education and low access to higher education by rural women in Assam. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research underlines the fact that the educational inequalities are interdependent and multidimensional. Using an intersectional lens, the research aims to conduct a systematic examination of the role in intersecting identities and structural barriers in determining the results of education and thus offer a more detailed view of inequality in rural Assam.

Review of Literature:-

Basumatary, R., and Das, M. (2018) Gender Inequality in Education and the Reasons of its Variation Across Assam, India. This paper will look at gender inequality in educational education in Assam through the Gender Parity Index (GPI) and Education Development Index (EDI). The results indicate that all the districts and all age groups have females underperforming males in terms of literacy. The research determines poverty, concentration of population in rural areas, and socio-religious make up as important factors in inequality. It also emphasizes that gender gap is growing as age advances, which suggests a problem of dropout and discontinuation. The regression analysis supports the fact that economic deprivation has a big impact on the access of females to education. The paper is significant in learning about structural and intersectional inequalities in Assam. Borgohain, A. (2020) Current Status of Women in Higher Education in Assam: An Analytical Study. This paper examines the involvement of women in higher education in Assam based on secondary sources like Census and AISHE reports. It concludes that female literacy has increased (67.3%), but it is still below that of the male (78.8%). In the research, the rural and backward regions are characterized by extreme obstacles such as early marriages, poverty and gender discrimination. It also

shows that female enrolment is decreasing drastically at the higher levels of education. Research findings conclude that even though policy measures are in place, structural disparities still affect the progress of women in education, particularly in the rural areas.

Baruah, S. (2021) Status of Women and Education: A Special Reference in Assam Context. The socio-cultural position of women and their role in education in Assam is discussed in this paper. It concludes that there is a patriarchal system that restricts women access to education despite the relatively favourable position in relation to the other Indian states. The paper points out that the rates of female dropout are still high particularly at the secondary levels. Government programs such as Pragyana Bharati have enhanced access that is not enough to eradicate disparities. The study highlights the importance of socio-cultural restrictions and economic factors in determining the educational participation of women. Konwar, P. (2015) Development of Women Education in Assam. This paper gives an analytical and historical account of women education in Assam. It demonstrates that whereas women were exposed to informal education in the previous eras, contemporary education was spread in the colonial times. Based on secondary data, the research points to the constant growth of female literacy, but points to the long-standing disparities of enrolment and retention. The results indicate that socio-economic backwardness and rural isolation still remain an obstacle to the development of women education. The paper highlights the role of education in socio-economic development.

Kalita, D. (2017) Higher Education and Women Involvement in Assam: An Analytical Study. This paper is concerned with the issue of women involvement in higher education in Assam. It concludes that even though there has been an increase in enrolment, there has been no gender equality anywhere in education. The paper points out that poverty, infrastructure and social restrictions are more in the rural women. Assam has a lower Gender Parity Index than the national average, which is a sign of inequality. The study highlights the necessity of specific policies to enhance the female representation in higher education. Das, S. (2019) Gender Gap in Higher Education in Assam. This research paper discusses the enrolment in higher education in Assam. It concludes that the bulk of the student population is at the undergraduate stage, with the percentage of female representation declining sharply at the postgraduate and doctoral stages. Structural obstacles in the study include restricted institutional access and socio-economic factors. It concludes that gender inequalities become greater with the rise in the level of education, a manifestation of deep-rooted inequality. Sharma, S. P. (2021) Impact of Female Literacy on Population Growth: A Study of Assam. This paper examines the association between female literacy and socio-economic development in Assam. It concludes that higher levels of female literacy are very important factors that have led to low fertility and better socio-economic status. The research highlights that education is one of the important determinants of women empowerment. It however adds that the level of literacy is not evenly distributed in rural and marginalized communities. The study illustrates the necessity of inclusive educational policies.

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

Objectives of the Study:-

1. To examine the nature and extent of educational disparities among women in rural Assam.
2. To analyze the intersectional factors- gender, rurality, socio-economic status, minority identity affecting access to education.
3. To identify challenges and opportunities for improving educational access among rural women using secondary data insights.

Research Methodology:-

The proposed research design is descriptive and analytical research design using secondary sources of data. The Census of India (2011), NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 reports, NSSO datasets, UDISE+ statistics, as well as the appropriate government and academic publications have supplied the data. The analysis uses an intersectional approach to analyze the role of gender, rurality, socio-economic status, and minority identity in access to education among women in rural Assam. Disparities and patterns are analyzed through methods like trend analysis, comparative

analysis and thematic interpretation. This method allows understanding the educational inequalities systematically without the main field research.

Discussions and Result:-

Nature and Extent of Educational Disparities among Women in Rural Assam:-

The essence and scope of women educational inequalities in rural Assam is the main focus of the current study because it is highly correlated with the general goal of mapping inequalities by an intersectional approach. Educational disparity is not simply about the disparity in the literacy levels, but also the disparity in terms of enrolment, retention, completion and access to higher education. These inequalities are conditioned by a set of factors, which includes gender discrimination, socio-economic limitations, geographical seclusion, and culture in rural Assam. In a basic level, the level of literacy offers a point of entry to measure the inequality in education. The Census of India (2011) says that the general literacy rate in Assam is 72.19, male literacy is 77.85 and female literacy is 66.27. This disparity of over 11 percentage points shows there has been a long-standing gender difference in access to education. Nevertheless, it is more alarming when one thinks of rural areas in isolation. The level of rural female literacy is still much lower than the urban female literacy, which means that the disadvantaged position of the rural women is exacerbated (Census of India, 2011). This rural-urban discord indicates an overlap of gender and geography, which is one of the issues of the given work.

In addition to the level of basic literacy, inequalities are even greater concerning educational levels. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 201921), very few women in Assam have either secondary or higher education. Although there is an improvement in enrolment in primary school because of policy interventions, girl's dropout rates escalate at secondary education. This tendency indicates that the access is not the guarantee of continuity in education. Girls are usually compelled to quit school because of early marriage, family commitments, and poverty (NFHS-5, 201921). The level of inequality can also be observed in the case of higher education participation. Research has shown that female enrolment reduces considerably with increased level of education and especially in the rural regions (Borgohain, 2020). This is indicative of barriers in the structure like the absence of facilities within the vicinity, transport, and security issues. In most of the rural areas of Assam, the distance to colleges and universities is not within reach and thus families are not encouraged to send girls further so as to obtain higher education. As a result, rural women still have low levels of educational attainment, which supports the cycles of socio-economic disadvantage. Socio-economic status is another significant aspect of inequality. Poverty is a key factor in defining educational access and outcome. The rural Assam families value immediate economic survival over long term investment in education, particularly to girls. This means that girls tend to be more active in the household or income-generating activities, which makes them attend school irregularly or abandon it altogether (Deka and Ahmed, 2019). This aspect of the economy overlaps with the norms of gender, which only exacerbates inequality. The aspect of culture and social factors also play a significant role in defining educational disparities. In rural Assam, patriarchal cultures tend to prioritize male education, which they consider as an investment in their future economic security. Contrarily, the education offered to girls is not considered important at times because of marriage and household chores. In a number of rural communities, early marriage is a burning problem that has direct implications on the continuation of education by girls (Baruah, 2021). These socio-cultural practices depict the effects of gender expectations on education outcomes.

These disparities are further complicated by the fact that minority identity intersects with them. Social exclusion and economic marginalization frequently pose an added burden to women in religious and ethnic minority groups, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). These populations are less likely to be well-read and have access to educational materials than the rest of the population (Basumatary and Das, 2018). In places like char (riverine) and tea garden communities, this is more serious because of the geographical isolation, bad infrastructure and absence of institutional support. Moreover, there is also a disparity related to the quality of education in the rural areas. In Assam, there are many rural schools with poor infrastructures, untrained teachers, and no basic facilities like toilets to the girls. Not only do these problems affect learning, but also deter regular attendance especially in the case of adolescent girls. Lack of gender sensitive learning facilities is one of the factors that lead to increased dropout and low education levels. New dimensions of educational inequality have been brought about by recent developments, namely, the digital divide. Rural women have been the more affected by the rising use of digital platforms in education, particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, because of the lack of access to digital technologies and the internet. This has also increased the urban-rural divide, as well as the male-female divide (UNESCO, 2021). The digital divide is therefore a new type of intersectional inequality that should be taken into account in the measurement of educational inequalities. Overall, the problem of educational inequalities among

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

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

The second objective of the paper is to examine the combined effects of various and interacting social factors, including gender, rurality, socio-economic status and minority status, on access to education among rural Assamese women. This goal is based on the theoretical model of intersectionality according to which inequalities are not isolated but are determined by the interplay of various social identities and structural factors (Crenshaw, 1989). The combination of these factors in the rural Assam setting creates overlapping disadvantages which significantly limit access to education by women. To begin with, gender is also one of the basic dimensions of inequality in education. And even with the policy measures to achieve gender parity, women in rural Assam still have to struggle with systemic constraints due to patriarchal practices and norms. Families tend to support male children more in their education as it is considered a better investment and girls have to add to the home chores. Such gender bias leads to low enrolment and high dropout rates of girls, especially on the secondary level (Baruah, 2021). This is also worsened by early marriage which breaks the continuity of education and hinders future achievements in education. In this way, gender is an influential factor that defines access to education.

Secondly, rurality is significant as a way of consolidating disparities in education. In Assam, rural areas are characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of educational facilities and poor transportation facilities. In most of the villages, secondary schools and colleges are not close enough and the girls find it hard to further their education beyond primary level. Security issues and movement limitations also discourage the families to take girls to far away schools. As a result, women in rural areas have a structural disadvantage relative to women in urban areas (Census of India, 2011). The rural setting, thus, overlaps with gender to enhance educational exclusion. Thirdly, socio-economic status is a very important determinant of access to education. In rural Assam, poverty is still a common problem and the poor families are not able to afford both the direct and indirect costs of education. The costs associated with school supplies, uniforms, transportation and private tuition impose financial strains on the education of girls which are increasingly disproportionately impacting the education of girls. Girls are in most cases pulled out of school to help in put food on the table or look after other children. It has been demonstrated that economic deprivation is closely linked with low levels of educational achievement among women (Deka and Ahmed, 2019). This implies that socio-economic status does not only restrict access, but it also influences retention and advancement in the education system.

Intersection of minority identity is an additional dimension to educational inequality. Assam is the dwelling place of different ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups, most of which are differentially marginalized. Minority women, such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and religious minorities, tend to be disadvantaged even more through the social exclusion, cultural, and economic deprivation. As an example, education infrastructure in char (riverine) regions and tea garden communities is highly underdeveloped, and the literacy level is much lower than the state average (Basumatary and Das, 2018). Access to government schemes and institutional support also is limited in these communities further limiting the opportunity of women to access education. More to the point, these factors are not independent of each other; instead, they overlap and support each other. As an illustration, a woman who is a minority in a rural region is most likely to encounter a compound disadvantage, as a result of her gender, geographical or territorial location, economic status, and social identity. The accumulating impact of this leads to greater educational marginalization than those who have a single form of disadvantage. The intersectional framework can therefore help us have a more detailed conceptualization of inequality by pointing out how these overlapping factors determine educational outcomes.

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

programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have increased the rate of enrolment, however, these efforts are usually unequal among various social classes. Marginalized women might not be able to access these programs because of their ignorance, administration or socio-cultural restrictions. This underscores the necessity of having more targeted and inclusive policy interventions which meet the special needs of different groups. Digital divide is another factor that is emerging and is becoming more relevant in recent years. In rural Assam, digital education is still not accessible because of the poor connection to the internet and the absence of digital devices. Women especially those living in low-income families are less likely to access smartphones or computers, which further limits their educational possibilities (UNESCO, 2021). This digital inequality cuts across the already present socio-economic and gender-based disparities, posing new challenges in the quest to achieve educational equity. To sum up, the intersectional factor analysis shows that the issue of educational differences between women in rural Assam is enclosed in a tangle of social, economic, and cultural determinants. The interactions between gender, rurality, socio-economic status and minority identity generate cumulative disadvantages, denying access to education at any of the levels. With the help of these overlapping dimensions, the given work does not only legitimize its interest in the given area known as intersectionality but also enhances the overall interpretation of the issue of educational inequality. This is necessary in the design of effective and inclusive policies that can target the underlying causes of the disparity and facilitate fair educational opportunities to all women in rural Assam.

Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Educational Access among Rural Women:-

The third goal of the research is to define the main issues and prospects of the enhancement of educational access of women in rural Assam, relying on the observations made in the context of secondary data sources. This is important to bring the research into its overall purpose of mapping the educational disparities using an intersectional framework. Although the other segments have pointed out the nature and determinants of inequality, this objective shifts to a more practical knowledge by looking at the barriers that impede access and the possible opportunities of inclusive educational progress. These structural challenges and emerging opportunities are strongly based on secondary data of the sources like Census of India (2011), NFHS-5 (2019), and current research studies.

Challenges:-

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

1. **Endemic Gender Inequality:** Patriarchal traditions still affect educational choices, with boys usually being given priority in education than girls. Girls are supposed to do domestic chores which results in inconsistent attendance and increased school dropouts (Baruah, 2021).
2. **Poverty and Economic Constraints:** Socio-economic deprivation is still a significant obstacle. Poor families usually pull girls out of school to work at home or minimize the costs of education (Deka and Ahmed, 2019).
3. **Inadequate Educational Infrastructure:** There are not enough schools in many of the rural areas and more so the secondary and higher secondary levels. Girls are not encouraged to continue with education because of poor infrastructure, lack of sanitation facilities, and a lack of female teachers (Census of India, 2011).
4. **Accessibility and Geographical Problems:** Riverine (char) and remote locations have serious connectivity challenges, and it is hard to reach institutions of learning. This is particularly impactful on girls because of the issue of mobility and safety (Basumatary and Das, 2018).
5. **Early Marriage and Social Norms:** Early marriage is still common in some rural areas resulting in the abandonment of education among the adolescent girls (NFHS-5, 2019).
6. **Marginalization of Minority Communities:** SC, ST and minority women experience multiplied disadvantages as they are excluded, have low income and poor institutional support.
7. **Digital Divide:** The move to digital learning has revealed disparities in access to technology. Women in the rural areas do not have access to smartphones, internet connectivity, or digital literacy (UNESCO, 2021).

Opportunities:

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

1. **Government Policy Initiatives:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and the stipulations of national education policy (NEP) 2020 are some of the initiatives that have increased the number of girls enrolled and the awareness of the education of girls.
2. **Growth of Educational Facilities:** New initiatives to build schools and colleges in the countryside and programs that supply free textbooks, uniforms and bicycles have enhanced accessibility.

3. **Rise in Female Literacy Trends:** Records have shown that female literacy has been on a continuous rise over the years and this has been an indication that there has been a positive change in the attitude of society towards the education of women (Census of India, 2011).
4. **Role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and NGOs:** Community based organizations are making a huge impact in ensuring that rural women are educated, empowered and made aware.
5. **Digital Education and Skill Development:** The digital divide continues but with the proliferation of digital infrastructure and literacy initiatives, there are new avenues of overcoming the educational disparities.
6. **Targeted Interventions for Marginalized Groups:** Special programs targeting SC/ST and minority groups can be used to better tackle intersectional inequalities.
7. **Increased Awareness and Social Change:** A shift in the attitudes towards the value of girl's education is slowly diminishing gender bias particularly among the younger generations.

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

Findings of the Study:-

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

1. **Persistent Gender Disparity in Education:** The researcher investigates that even though the general literacy level is improving; in Assam, a large disparity between the genders continues to exist in rural areas. The level of female literacy still remains lower than that of male literacy and especially in the rural regions meaning that access to education is not even (Census of India, 2011).
2. **Pronounced Rural Urban Divide:** Education inequality is high in rural than in urban. Rural women have little access to educational facilities, lack of proper infrastructure as well as connectivity, which greatly influences their educational achievements.
3. **Low Educational Attainment beyond Primary Level:** Although the enrolment in the primary level has improved, the girls have higher rates of dropping out in the secondary and higher secondary levels. It means that access does not always guarantee retention or completion of education (NFHS-5, 2019).
4. **Powerful Effect of Socio-Economic Status:** Poverty is also found to be a driving force of educational inequality. Girls of weaker backgrounds tend to quit education because of financial impact and domestic chores (Deka and Ahmed, 2019).
5. **Impact of Patriarchal Norms and Social Practices:** The cultural influences of gender bias, preference of boy's education, and early marriage are the main factors that interfere with the education of girls and their retention (Baruah, 2021).
6. **Intersectional Disadvantage in Women of Minority:** Women who are a part of the minority communities, such as SCs, STs, and religious minorities, are subjected to compounded disadvantage as they face social exclusion, economic deprivation, and are not supported by the institutions (Basumatary and Das, 2018).
7. **Poor Educational Facilities in Rural Areas:** Schools, particularly higher education, lack of basic facilities and trained teachers are all factors that make rural women less active and more likely to drop out.
8. **Emerging Digital Divide as a New Barrier:** The growing dependence on digital education has only brought new disparities, with rural women having less access to digital technology and the internet, which further deepens the educational inequality divide (UNESCO, 2021).
9. **Positive Trends in Female Literacy and Policy Impact:** Female literacy and enrolment have been steadily improving as a result of government action and awareness creation, and shows potential to improve.
10. **Requirement of Intersectional Policy Approach:** The paper discovers that the educational disparities cannot be tackled using a one-dimensional approach. Interventions should be effective given the compounding effect of gender, rurality, socio-economic status, and minority identity.

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

Conclusion:-

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

The research also shows that the enrolment and literacy gains do not always lead to equity in the achievement of education. The secondary level has high dropout rates, low involvement in higher learning, and the new digital divide, which signifies the enduring gaps in the education system. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals a number of opportunities, such as, the progressive government policies, the growing awareness regarding the education of girls, and the growing role of community-based interventions. These trends indicate that there can be a significant change in case strategies are aligned. To sum up, the educational gap between women in rural Assam cannot be addressed only by gender-specific interventions and needs a comprehensive and intersectional policy. Specific solutions are required that would tackle the economic barriers, lack of infrastructures, cultural limitations, and digital inequalities. Improving the rural education infrastructure, gender sensitivity, and accessibility by marginalized groups are key measures to an equitable education. Finally, rural women empowerment by means of education is not only a social justice issue but also a key channel towards sustainable and inclusive development in Assam.

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