

Gender Inequalities and Issues: A Study of Tinsukia District in Assam

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ABSTRACT: Gender is not a genetically or biologically given concept but a social construction. It refers to the social construction of differences between men and women. For example, there is a belief that men are strong and brave compared to women. Gender inequality is the social conception in which men and women are not equally treated.

The present study was conducted with a view to find out whether gender inequality is prevalent in Tinsukia district of Assam. Total 200 women were selected randomly. The study was conducted through descriptive survey method.

Keywords: Gender inequality, gender issue, Tinsukia district.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: Gender inequality is social phenomenon and discrimination in which one sex or gender gets better privileges or prioritized over another. Gender inequality has been a pivotal social issue in the society today. While talking about gender inequalities or gender discrimination, both sexes are considered, but women are the main victim of it. The discrimination starts before the girl child is born. In many cases she is discriminated from being born. The girl child is often deprived of the basic rights and equal facilities to lead a good life.

Gender equality is fundamental human right. So, gender disparity violates the basic right of the individual. Although different acts and other constitutional framework are there to overcome gender discrimination in all sphere, yet gender discrimination is still visible today in every sphere. Hence the present study aims to find out the issues of gender discrimination faced by women of Guijan block of Tinsukia district in Assam.

2.0 OBJECTIVES: The study was carried out with the following objectives.

- i. To study and find out issues of gender discrimination faced by women of Guijan block in Tinsukia district.
- ii. The present study has also made an attempt to find out the causes of gender discrimination of the area under study.

3.0 METHODOLOGY: The study was carried out through a suitable research method called descriptive survey method. The population of the study involved women of Guijan Block of Tinsukia district in Assam. Total 200 women respondents from four villages namely: Kachujan, Kokratoli, Gelapukhuri, and Dhelakhat gaon of Guijan block of Tinsukia district were selected randomly. For collection of data, a portion of the sample size was interviewed while for the rest questionnaire was distributed.

Data was also collected from secondary sources like books, journals, etc.

4.0 STUDY AREA: The present study has been carried out in Tinsukia district of Assam. Tinsukia is one of the 34 administrative districts of Assam and is situated at the extreme North-East corner of Assam. According to census report of 2011, the district has a population of 13,27,929. Out of which 6,80,231 are

male and 6,47,698 are female. Tinsukia district is inhabited by different communities mainly Moran, Motok, Sonowal Kachari, Tai-Ahom, Nepali, Adivasi, Bengali, Marwari and Bihari.

In the present study total sample included 200 women from different communities of Kachujan, Kokorotoli, Gelapukhuri and Dhelakhat Gaon(village) under Guijan block of Tinsukia district, Assam.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: The collected data from total sample of 200 women of Guijan Block in Tinsukia district have been analyzed. Among 200 women respondents some of them are working in different sectors like education, hospitals, offices private sectors, while others are housewife and some of them are daily wage earners.

Table 1: Rate of gender bias in the immediate environment of Guijan block in Tinsukia district

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
15	NON-EXISTENT	7.5%
45	MILD	22.5%
120	EXISTENT	60%
20	NO RESPONSE	10%

Table 1 reveals that out of 200 respondents 7.5% said gender inequality is not existent in their immediate environment. According to 22.5% respondents there is mild gender discrimination in the area of Tinsukia district. While 10% women did not express their opinion in this regard. But 60% women firmly expressed their views that gender inequality is prevalent in the area under study.

Table 2: Respondents comment on being victim of gender discrimination.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
130	YES	65%
50	NO	25%
20	NO RESPONSE	10%

Table 2 Shows that 65% women of Guijan block in Tinsukia district have faced gender discrimination. 2.5% women have never become victim of it. Another 10% respondents did not want to put forward their views in this regard.

Table 3: Level of awareness about Sexual Harassment Act 2013, Domestic Violence Act 2005.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
81	YES	40.5%
119	NO	59.5%

Table 3 discloses the fact that only 40.5% women of Guijan block are aware about the Sexual Harassment Act 2013 and Domestic Violence Act 2005. But 59.5% women are still not aware about these acts and in fact they have no knowledge at all about it.

Table 4: Kinds of gender inequality and discrimination witnessed by the respondents in the area under study.

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION	PERCENTAGE
40	NOT PROVIDING EDUCATION	20%
70	MAL NUTRITION	35%
90	ABORTION OR FEMALE FOETICIDE	45%

Table 4 reveals the fact that 20% of the respondents are of the notion that girls do not have equal access to education like men in the villages under Guijan block. According to them, most of the parents do not want to send their daughters to school, and rather prefer to make them occupied in household activities. But in case of boys or sons it is just opposite. 35% respondents express their views that most of the girls of Guijan block have been suffering from malnutrition. This is just because of the negligence of their parents in providing food, taking care of health of the female child. Another 45% respondents very sadly expressed that female foeticide or abortion is the worst example of gender discrimination in the area under study. According to the respondents, many women are compelled by their family members to go for abortion when the family come to know about it. It is needless to mention though sonography is strictly prohibited today, there are malicious ways to get access to it in this area under study.

The present study also makes clear certain facts like -

- Even when both husband and wife earn wages, women do twice as much household activities and child care.
- It is also observed from the study that most of the women, more particularly those who are housewives tend to be upset and dissatisfied because their decisions are not given due importance at home in every sphere of their family matters and male domination is very much prevalent.
- Women's decisions are not considered in decision making at workplace. No matter how valuable or justified their decisions are, they are given lesser weightage compared to the male counter employees. Though sometimes women are taken in different committees at workplace to show diversity, but they are not involved in real practices.

The study reviews the fact that though there is different acts and constitutional framework to protect women from any kind of discrimination and eradicate gender inequality, but it is still existent at workplace, family and everywhere in the society and Tinsukia district is no exception.

6.0 CAUSES OF GENDER INEQUALITY

The present study has also identified certain causes of gender inequality in Guijan Block of Tinsukia district.

1. **Poor economic condition:** Most of the women of the area are not able to afford good health care and other requirements due to poor economic condition. They always depend on their partners or other family members, ultimately leading to prevailing male domination.

2. **Lack of awareness:** One of the major causes of gender inequality of the area under study is lack of awareness among women about their rights and ability to achieve equality. Cultural and social practices also play a major role in keeping women at lower places in the society and compel them to be subservient to men.
3. **Lack of education:** Lack of education is another cause of gender gap in the villages of Guijan block. Many young women between the age group of 22 to 30 have not even completed primary school education. The problem is, due to lack of education these women are not aware of their rights.
4. **Social mindsets:** Overall social mindset of the society has significant impact on gender inequality of the area under study. The traditional stereotypical concepts of women's roles such as occupying themselves in household work, taking care of their children, as financially dependent housewives are still prevalent in the villages under Tinsukia district.

7.0 CONCLUSION:

Gender equality is the basic human right for all. The present study shows that gender discrimination still exists everywhere in the society. Hence a focus on gender equality is very essential to prevent the inequality gaps between men and women. Nevertheless, gender related issues are always challenged to develop an equitable society. Therefore, constitutional or legal protection cannot merely eliminate the barriers of gender discrimination. Families, societies, different organizations including educational institutions, and government have to play a very positive and significant role in this regard. Everybody must stop wrong and traditional stereotype practices at home, work, and society at large to overcome gender-inequalities.

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