

Status and Determinants of Women's Education in Hojai District, Assam: A Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background: Women education is an important determinant of social development, economic growth and public health status. At the policy level, India has been trying to address it but regional inequalities continue to remain, especially in semi-urban and rural districts of the North East. **Objective:** This study aimed to examine the situation of women's education status in Hojai District, Assam and determine the major socio-demographic, economic and institutional determinants that influences educational attainment. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from January 2021 to November 2021 among 350 women using an interviewer-administered structured questionnaire. Results were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** Secondary and higher secondary education was predominant in terms of achievement. Parents' education, family, marriage at an early age and accessibility to schools were significantly related to the educational status. **Conclusion:** Women's education in Hojai District is improving slowly but social & economic limitation is blocking the higher educational achievement. Bespoke interventions that respond to poverty at the household, gendered norms and institutional access are necessary.

Keywords: Women's education; Determinants; Assam; Hojai District; Cross-sectional study.

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of women's education is universally recognized as a factor in sustainable development, gender equality and social change. More educated women make large contributions to economic productivity, improved family health, lower fertility rates and better education for the next generation [1]. In the context of developing countries such as India, women's education and livelihood can be an important target for breaking poverty and social exclusion cycles. There are constitutional safeguards as well as targeted schemes like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* and the National Education Policy, yet regional, social and economic disparities in female education continue.

India has quantitatively accomplished the goal of attaining improved literate female work force during the last two decades, but there is a variance within regions. Female education continues to be lower in rural, minority and poor areas [2]. The north eastern region of India of which Assam is part constitutes a special historical, geographical and socio-cultural entity

that has impact on the access to, and quality of education. Practices like early marriage, household obligation to work and migration due to lack of institutional infrastructure cast a disproportionate shadow on girls' education in these areas.

Despite achieving overall literacy, Assam persists with gender-inequalities at secondary and tertiary levels of education [3]. Hojai District, established as a new administrative district in 2016, comprising mixed rural-urban population, cultural diversity and different levels of socio-economic development. Women in this district face a double disadvantage due to interrelated reasons of poverty, traditional gender norms and minimal exposure to opportunities for higher education. It is, thus important to take into account the district-level determinants for policy decisions.

There is absence of local level, district-specific studies while empirical evidence on women's education in Assam are mainly based on the indicators at the state level [4]. There is a need for micro-level studies to

identify situational facts that can inform targeted strategies. This paper attempts to fill this gap by analysing the status and factors of women's education in Hojai District using a cross-sectional design as part of an emergent literature on gender and education – across much of Northeast India.

OBJECTIVE

The present research aimed to evaluate the status of education among women in Hojai District, Assam. This entailed comparing literacy and school continuation rates between various age groups and socio-economic category in addition to formal educational attainment. By capturing these trends, the study intended to offer a broad snapshot of women's educational involvement at the district level.

A secondary objective was to explore the key drivers that impact on women's levels of education. These factors are socio-demographic (age, marital status, household family size and parental education), economic (household's monthly income and occupation status) and institutional (distance to school, scholarship availability and perceived safe distance). Knowledge of these determinants is essential for the development of evidence-based educational and social interventions [5].

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

A community-based cross-sectional study was carried out from January 2025 to November 2025 in SASPR Edu International Private Limited, Hojai District of Assam. The study population was of women aged 18–45 years residing in Hojai District for at least 1 year. A sample size of 350 participants was informed by prevalence estimates from the literature and practicality.

A pre-tested structured questionnaire was employed for data collection. The tool had domains for sociodemographic variables, previous educational history, family background and economic status and perceived barriers to education. The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Assamese for better understanding. Face validity of the questionnaire was checked by panel of experts and pretest was done with 30 women to build final tool.

The study was approved by the internal ethics committee of SASPR Edu International Private Limited. A signed informed consent was also obtained from all Subjects before conducting data collection. Privacy and

anonymity were carefully preserved under all program conditions.

Inclusion Criteria: Women aged 18-45 years residing in Hojai District and willing to participate.

Exclusion Criteria: Women with severe cognitive impairment or those unwilling to provide informed consent.

Data Collection Procedure: Data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted by trained female investigators. Each interview lasted approximately 25-30 minutes.

Statistical Data Analysis

Data were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) were used to summarize variables. Chi-square tests and logistic regression were applied to assess associations between educational status and determinant variables. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

The mean age of participants was 29.4 ± 6.8 years. The majority (42.9%) had completed secondary education, followed by higher secondary (24.6%), primary education (18.3%), and graduation or above (14.2%). Approximately 11.7% of participants reported school dropout before completing secondary education. Early marriage and household financial constraints were the most commonly cited reasons.

Parental education showed a strong positive association with women's educational attainment ($p<0.01$). Women from households with monthly income above INR 20,000 were significantly more likely to complete higher secondary or tertiary education compared to those from lower-income households. Accessibility to educational institutions within 5 km was also significantly associated with continued education [6].

Employment status and exposure to educational support schemes were positively correlated with higher educational levels. Women who reported awareness of government scholarships were twice as likely to pursue education beyond secondary level. Cultural norms restricting mobility were identified as a barrier by 37.1% of respondents.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants (n = 350)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age group	18–24 years	92	26.3
	25–34 years	168	48.0
	35–45 years	90	25.7
Marital status	Unmarried	138	39.4
	Married	212	60.6

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Residence	Rural	214	61.1
	Urban	136	38.9
Family type	Nuclear	227	64.9
	Joint	123	35.1

Table 2: Educational attainment levels of respondents

Level of education	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Primary (up to class V)	64	18.3
Secondary (class VI–X)	150	42.9
Higher secondary (class XI–XII)	86	24.6
Graduation and above	50	14.2
Total	350	100.0

Table 3: Association between household income and educational status

Monthly household income (INR)	≤ Secondary n (%)	≥ Higher secondary n (%)	Total
< 10,000	74 (71.8)	29 (28.2)	103
10,001–20,000	96 (55.8)	76 (44.2)	172
> 20,000	44 (58.7)	31 (41.3)	75
Total	214	136	350

Table 4: Parental education and women's educational attainment

Parental education	≤ Secondary n (%)	≥ Higher secondary n (%)	Total
Illiterate/Primary	102 (72.3)	39 (27.7)	141
Secondary	78 (58.2)	56 (41.8)	134
Higher secondary & above	34 (45.3)	41 (54.7)	75
Total	214	136	350

Table 5: Reported barriers to women's education

Barrier	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Financial constraints	132	37.7
Early marriage	96	27.4
Household responsibilities	88	25.1
Distance to institution	72	20.6
Safety and mobility concerns	65	18.6
Lack of parental support	54	15.4

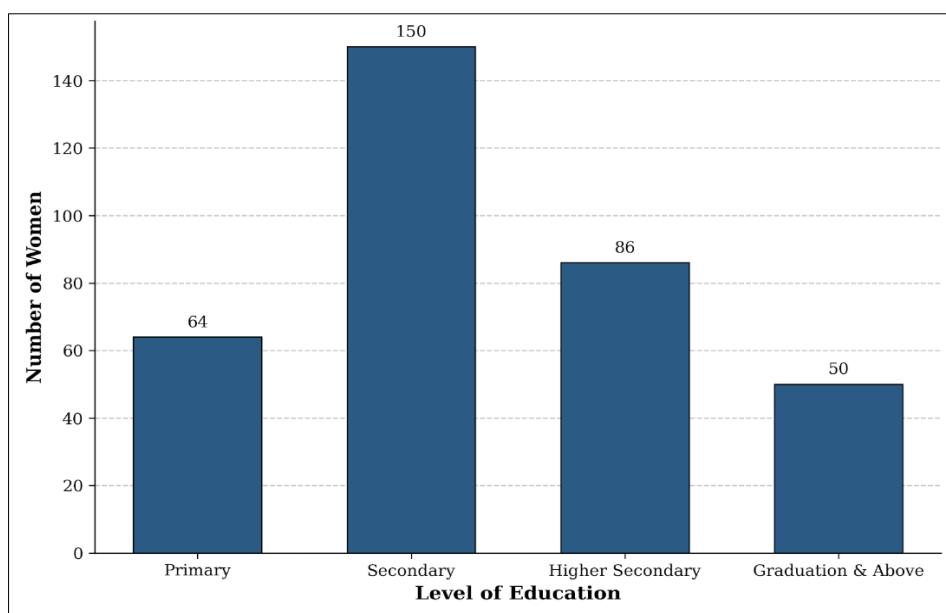
**Figure 1: Showing Educational Attainment Distribution**

Figure 1 showing the educational attainment of women in Hojai District, Assam (n = 350). The bar chart illustrates the distribution of respondents across primary,

secondary, higher secondary, and graduation or higher levels of education.

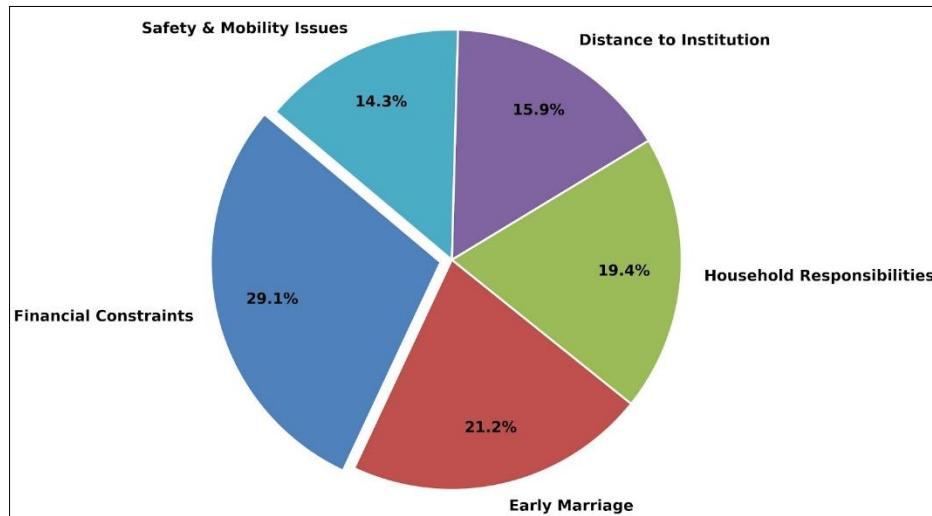


Figure 2: Depicting Reasons for School Dropout

Figure 2 showing the reasons for school dropout among women in Hojai District, Assam. The pie chart depicts the proportional contribution of major factors, including financial constraints, early marriage, household responsibilities, distance to educational institutions, and safety or mobility concerns.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this study indicate that gains were made and challenges remain in women's education in Hojai District. The higher secondary level prevalence also correlates with recent national-level patterns that show improved retention of girls up to the secondary level in Bangladesh [7]. But the fall in boys' participation at higher secondary and tertiary levels reveals a structural and socio-cultural barrier that is yet unsolved.

Parental education was a strong predictor, which is in line with previous findings on intergenerational transfer of educational advantage [8]. Educated parents are also more likely to esteem school going, support academics and postpone early marriage. Family resources were also highly influential, confirming the influence of economic congestion on attendance continuity, particularly at private or semi-private levels.

Structural barriers, including access to schools or the level of security, as well as knowledge of support schemes are indeed paramount for educational achievements. Similar observations have come from studies in rural India, highlighting the necessity for combined policy actions along with financial support, infrastructural development and community participation [9]. The challenge however is to address gender norms and early marriage, which continue to be vital for maintaining educational achievements.

Limitations of the Study

This study, however, has some limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference regarding the determinants and educational effects. Information on self-reported trials could be influenced by recall and social desirability bias. Moreover, the study was restricted in a district and not necessarily applicable to another area of Assam or India. Further longitudinal and qualitative studies are encouraged to take into account dynamic educational trajectories and broader socio-cultural settings [10].

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CONCLUSION

This study has contributed toward developing an understanding regarding the status and determinants of women education in Hojai district, Assam. Though education at second tier has been remarkable, the shift to upper tiers is limited by various economic, familial and cultural reasons. These challenges are best addressed through cross-sectoral co-operation in education, social welfare and communities.

Policy implications financial support should be provided to vulnerable families, more educational facilities with easy access and community-based awareness programs. Better parental education and postponement of early marriage are two important drivers that can enhance women's educational status.

Long-term evaluation and area-specific study are necessary for an equitable and sustainable educational development [11-13].

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